

'ALL AH WE HUSTLIN NOW'

Economic and Social Change in an East Indian
Community in Guyana

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is a study of technical innovation, economic change and ethnicity in the context of an East Indian rice farming community in Guyana, South America. The research was a follow-up to a previous study of the community, and concentrated on the following questions:

- 1) Why had the predictions of the previous study concerning the agricultural future of the village not been borne out?
- 2) How necessary is it for decision-making about innovation to be seen in terms of a series of constraining administrative contexts?
- 3) To what extent did Hechter's model of 'internal colonialism' apply to the post-independence situation in Guyana?
- 4) How effective were modernisation theories in explaining the changes experienced in the research community?
- 5) What implications did these changes have for the pattern of Guyanese ethnicity?

The research showed that the system of rice production had been heavily modified by mechanisation, which had proved disadvantageous to many farmers. These were only able to survive economically by engaging in regular employment in Georgetown, the capital, which was within travelling distance. This move to urban employment was paralleled not only by young men, but also by an increasing number of females, and represented a major change in traditional East Indian economic patterns.

The new forms of economic activity also had wider implications, since the urban employment market had traditionally been an African preserve. Thus the intrusion of Indians was likely to be seen as an economic threat to their interests, and was in turn reflected at the national political level. The thesis examines the ways in which these processes affected the community and its changing relation to Government.

Finally the thesis reviews anthropological approaches to the study of ethnicity and social change in the light of the research findings.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis has been composed by myself and is based on research that I conducted.

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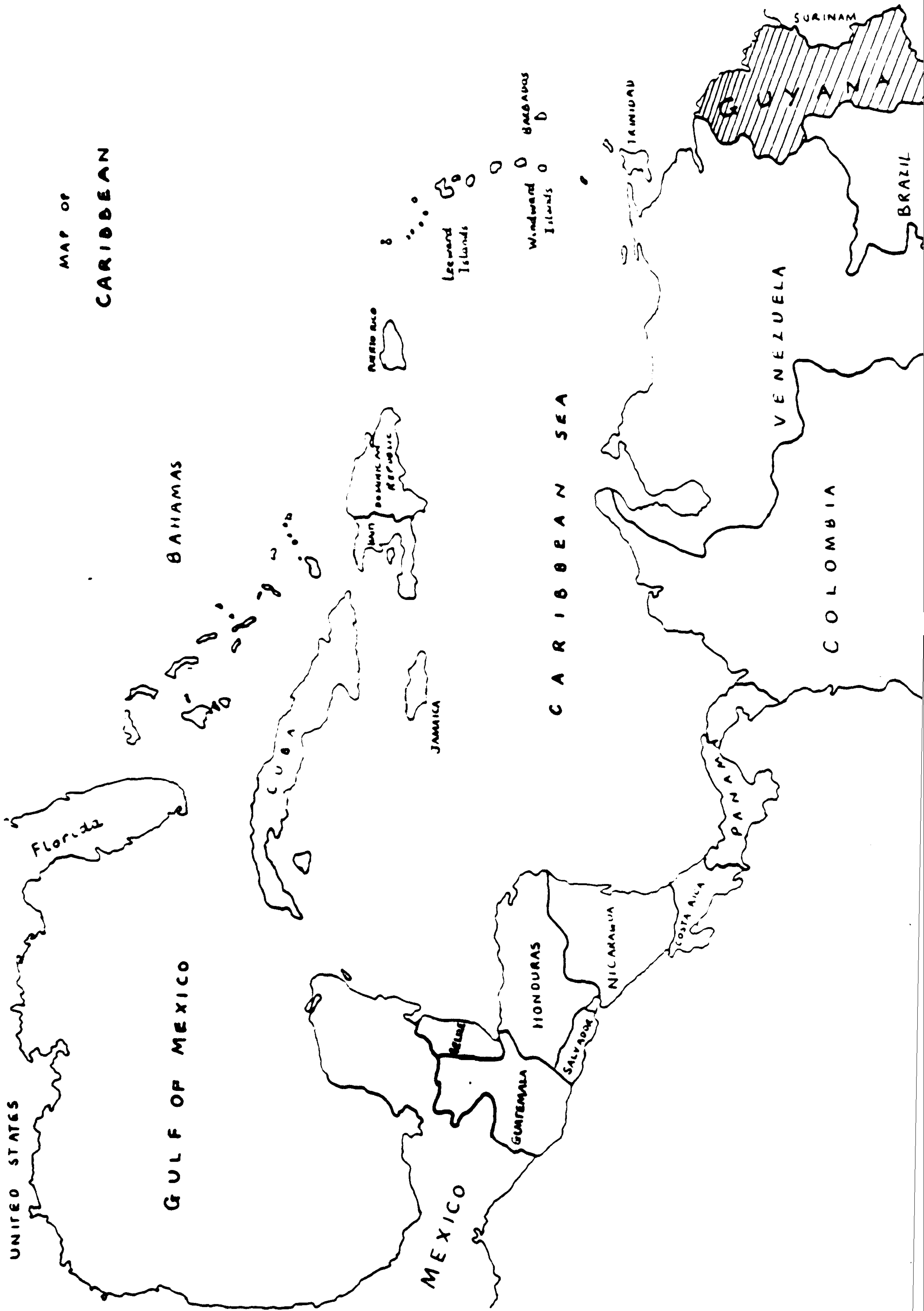
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MAP 1.



INTRODUCTION

- The Study of Social Change.
- The Evolution of the Present Study.
- The Research Topics.
- The Format of the Thesis.
- Fieldwork.
- Acknowledgements.
- A Note on Currency.

THE STUDY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

"Change is a constant. It is taking place at varying rates and degrees everywhere and always."
(Herscovits 1966:40)

Despite this panoramic view of social change, which appears to be a major commitment on the part of the social sciences, a convention has developed in Social Anthropology and Sociology that 'social change' is an area or sub-branch of the disciplines, with the associated attributes of special courses being taught on this subject and a specific literature relating to the area of activity. Yet it is possible to argue that change is precisely what the social sciences have always been studying, and that indeed it was the questions of the evolution of human social organisation that initially contributed most to the establishment of the social science disciplines.

Thus for the great social thinkers of the nineteenth century, who played such a crucial role in this endeavour, the focus of their interest was primarily the evolution of human society as a whole. These grand explanatory schema exhibited a number of distinctive characteristics, one of which was the use of polar extremes of a continuum to characterise the effects of social evolution. For Durkheim, for example, this was found in the distinction between 'mechanical' and 'organic' forms of solidarity, whilst for Maine it was to be located in his distinction of the move from 'status' to 'contract' and for Tonnies in the characteristics of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. A further tendency of these writers was to consider the process of social evolution as being essentially unilinear, with the Victorian society in which they lived being at the more sophisticated end of the continuum, which has in turn led to the accusation by later

generations that these analyses exhibit an ethnocentric bias.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of these classic social theories is this emphasis on unilinear evolution. This in turn leads to a conceptualisation of change as being essentially endogenous, which is also a characteristic which is to be found in the work of Marx as well. This tendency to see social change in such unilinear evolutionary terms is so pervasive in Western social thought, that Nisbet has been able to chart its origins back to ancient Greek writing (1969).

With the decline in popularity of the evolutionary perspective during the present century and with the development of the social sciences one might think that the emphasis on endogenous conceptualisations of social change would also decline. One would particularly expect this to be so in the case of the functionalist theories that emerged and held sway for so long in both Social Anthropology and Sociology. Functionalism theories are frequently conceived of as being ahistorical, and certainly one sees a marked contrast between the 'timelessness' of Evans Pritchard's analysis of the Nuer and the later commentaries that have sought to set the Nuer into a more specific historical and evolutionary perspective (Sahlins 1961; Gough 1971; Southall 1976).

Nevertheless functionalist analysts did attempt to deal with change, as is exemplified by Malinowski's formulations about 'culture contact', unsatisfactory though they might be, and Radcliffe Brown's distinction between changes in the system and changes to the system (1952). Of more significance were the writings of those

anthropologists who examined specific situations of change, such as Firth, Gluckman and Leach. Thus the post-war era, at least as far as British Social Anthropology was concerned, was marked by a continuing debate about how change could be incorporated into the functionalist theoretical explanations that had produced so many new insights into the social organisation of traditional societies. We thus had Firth's famous distinction between 'social structure' and 'social organisation', which enabled him to insert an element of change and flexibility into his model of a largely unchanging system (1951). Similarly there were the great debates of the 1950s and 1960s concerning the utility or otherwise of equilibrium models and the study of social conflict.

At the time the fierce exchanges between Leach and Gluckman on these issues appeared to be concerned with fundamentally different conceptualisations of social organisation, but as Kuper (1973) has pointed out, with the passage of time it can be seen that the differences in approach were not so great. Similarly Nisbet has concluded that the functionalist discussion of change is essentially within the old established tradition of Western thought in this area:

"The point, however, is that functional anthropologists, like functional sociologists, are dealing with their materials in terms of preconceptions regarding the nature of change that are drawn from the theory of social evolution."

(Nisbet 1969:237)

Thus the tradition of the conceptualisation of change as endogenous persisted.

The most significant innovation in this area of investigation was the emergence of theories of change that were concerned with changes that were exogenous rather than endogenous. Of course the old

problems of social evolution still remained and the grand-scale picture is still as difficult to conceptualise as ever it was. Nevertheless, these newer approaches did recognise that increasingly many societies in the world were being affected by the activities of the more industrial nations, especially in the form of European colonialism and the associated activities of world capitalism. Some of the earliest work in this area was done by the Wilsons on the Copperbelt of Zambia (1945) and for a long time this area served as a major research site for the work of Central Africanists under the leadership of Max Gluckman.

It was the effects of urbanisation in particular that began to attract the interest of such anthropologists and there were a number of studies of the new forms of social organisation that were emerging in the towns that were springing up all over Africa as the commercial exploitation of natural resources got underway. In a different vein the work of Little (1965) in West Africa, where the commercial pressures of international corporations were not as apparent as elsewhere, showed similar new values and patterns emerging as immigrants adapted to life in the town. In these studies the new town dwellers were coming to terms with Western activities such as mining and factory work, complex organisations such as bureaucracies, management structures and trade unions, as well as the social diversity of the town. At the same time they were being put into certain relationships in the economic process, with the resultant emergence of nascent class structures and patterns of industrial organisation which were very different from traditional ways and which had more in common, in many ways, with the experience of workers in the Western industrial countries than with their fellow villagers in

the rural areas.

The work that came out of this sphere of investigation concentrated on the new forms of social organisation and the way in which individuals coped with the changed circumstances of the town. Thus the development of the concept of social network proved very useful for the advancement of this area of analysis (Mitchell 1969), as well as the individual-oriented transactional approach (Kapferer 1972). The study of rural social change at this time also began to be examined from the point of view of exogenous change, with a focus on the activities of specific development projects being a common one (T.S. Epstein 1962). The inter-play of the town and the country was also investigated, with an emphasis on the spread of the new values (Long 1968).

Although these investigations revealed the dynamic impact of European organisations such as mining companies and colonial administrations they were essentially dealing with situations where the pressures from outside had been applied fairly recently. They were also dealing with, for the most part, cases of traditional social systems existing on their traditional sites and coping with the penetration of Western activities and values. Almost all of these studies also demonstrated the same direction of change, the traditional systems were becoming more Western and less traditional: 'modernisation' was the most common characterisation of this process.

However, the processes of Western expansion that underlay much of the change that anthropologists increasingly investigated had been operating for very much longer in other areas. Unfortunately many of

the theories that had been developed for use in the new towns and nascent cash-crop farms of Africa were of limited utility in dealing with these older situations of colonial contact, such as the West Indies. In such societies one does not have an indigenous population responding to the intervention of external forces, for these are entirely immigrant societies deliberately created by the activities of European capitalism and colonialism. Even the peasantries that existed there were 'reconstituted' variants of those to be found in the original homelands of the migrant populations in Africa, India and China.

Just as the functionalists' discussion of change can be seen as essentially evolutionary, so too can much of that of the investigators of much economic and social change who worked within the modernisation framework. Such work had limited utility for the study of societies such as those to be found in the West Indies which had undergone many of the experiences of contemporary Africa many years before. This situation did change, however, with the move to new approaches to ethnicity. For with the work of people such as Abner Cohen, whose study of the Hausa of Ibadan in Nigeria (1969) featured the unusual experience of 'retribalisation', variations in the one-way process of modernisation became possible. New approaches to the study of the older colonial societies of the West Indies became feasible.

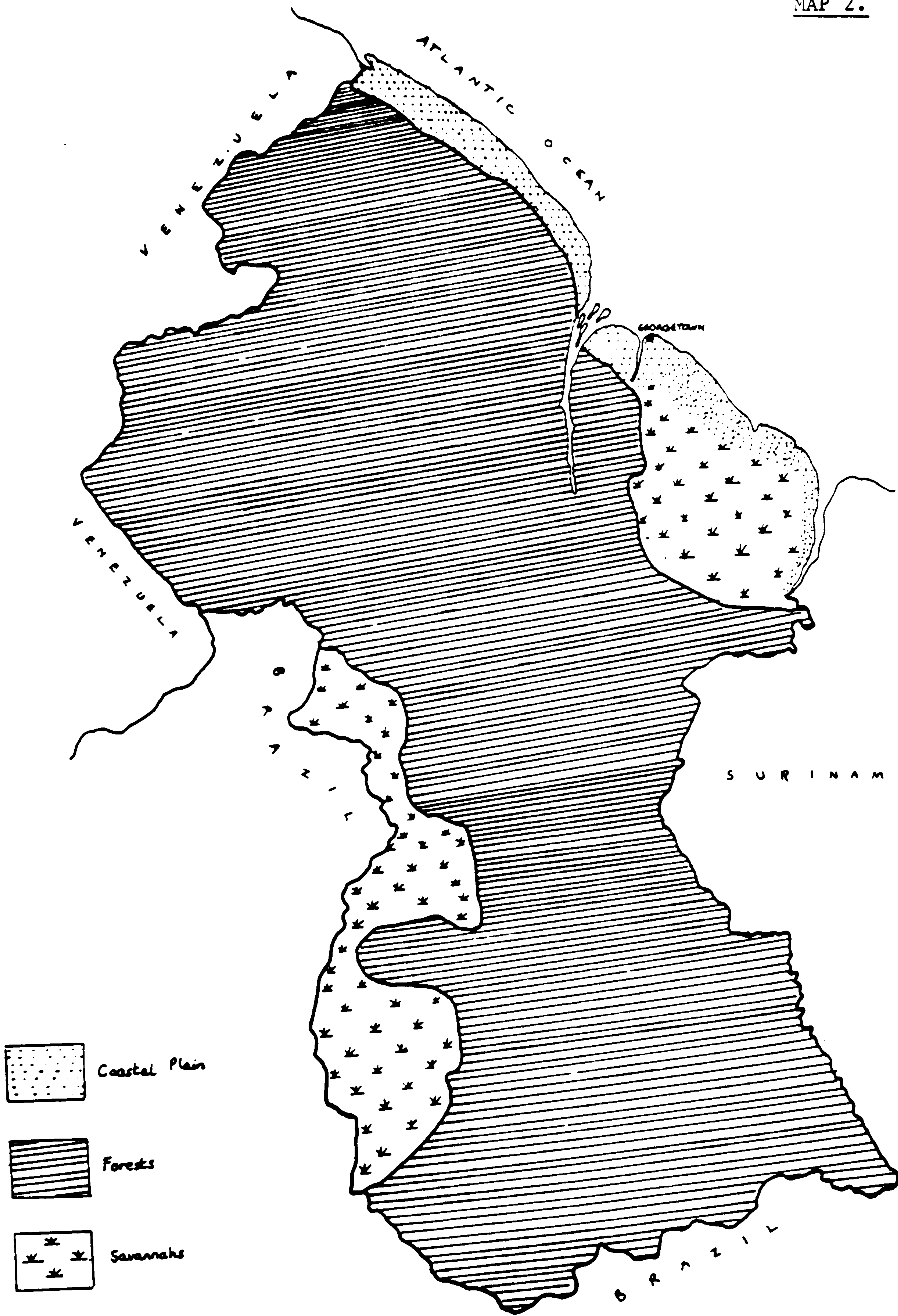
THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRESENT STUDY

It was out of this background that the present study emerged. My intention was to concentrate on rural economic and social change. By this I hoped to avoid the problems of trying to deal with the complexities of urban life, which I felt would tend to obscure many of

the social processes that were at work. I wished to investigate the case of a rural ethnic group which was experiencing new economic opportunities from cash-crop farming and was thus in a position to engage in wider forms of social activity, possibly with the modification of their ethnic identity.

I eventually chose Guyana for this investigation, since it had a multi-ethnic population whose cultural characteristics had been heavily modified by the experience of both colonialism and capitalism, in the form of the sugar plantation system. Although the country has a total area of some 83,000 square miles, in fact only the low-lying coastal plain is really inhabited, with approximately 90% of the country's population of 700,000 living there (see Maps 1 and 2). The original Amerindian population has either been destroyed or driven into the forest interior, leaving the coast to the immigrants. These are composed of Africans, the descendants of the slaves brought to work the plantations from the eighteenth century onwards; the Indians who were brought from India in the last century when the supply of slaves dried up; the Chinese and the Portuguese, from Madeira, who were brought in smaller numbers for the same purposes during the same era; and the very small number of Europeans who were descended from the plantation owners and managers. It is because of this ethnic mix that Guyana has been called 'The Land of Six Peoples', though it is noteworthy that only one of these, the Amerindians, are indigenous, and that four of the remaining five groups came under the command of the fifth and smallest one of all, the Europeans.

MAP 2.



MAP OF
GUYANA

Immigration was essential for the survival of Guyana, since it was not until the 1920s that the population showed any signs of natural increase. The cause lay in a combination of very poor living conditions, poor nutrition and the effects of malaria, which were very severe. Nevertheless the distinct ethnic groups survived and have stayed distinct, racially, socially, culturally, economically and spatially. The Indians, who form just over half of the total population, have remained predominantly rural and provide the majority of the labour on the sugar estates. These have dominated the economy of the country for almost two hundred years and more than anything else are responsible for its very existence. Until recently sugar provided the overwhelming bulk of the country's earnings, though recently this role has been assumed by bauxite. This is mined at two sites in the country, both of which are relatively isolated, and although it employs high technology and expensive capital inputs, the industry does not employ anywhere near as many people as does sugar.

The third export industry of the country is rice, though as an export-earner it trails well behind sugar and bauxite. On the other hand it does have the distinctive characteristic of being the only industry that has always been under local control. The industry began to develop at about the turn of the century and the country has been self-sufficient in rice since the 1920s. Production has traditionally been by small family farming groups and the producers are overwhelmingly Indian. After the last war the Guyanese rice industry was offered the protected market of the British West Indies, the industry boomed and the Indian population benefitted greatly from this.

I therefore conceived of this as being an experimental situation where it would be possible to investigate a case of a relatively poor and low status rural ethnic group benefitting from exogenous economic change and thus having the possibility of asserting a modified ethnic identity. The problem that I faced in implementing this investigation was that since most of the literature had been written there had been significant political changes in the country. The most important were the events of the early 1960s when for several years a racial civil war appeared to be imminent. This had culminated in the downfall of the 'Indian' party and the coming to power of the 'African' party, which had now led the country to independence.

In such a situation the selection of a research community was a considerable problem, since the guidance that could be obtained from the literature was so out of date. At this point I wrote to Professor Raymond T. Smith of the University of Chicago, who has probably done more anthropological research in Guyana than anyone else, and asked his advice. He suggested a follow-up study of Windsor Forest, which he had studied fifteen years earlier, and it was from this suggestion that the current research developed.



MAP OF

WEST DEMERARA

THE RESEARCH TOPICS

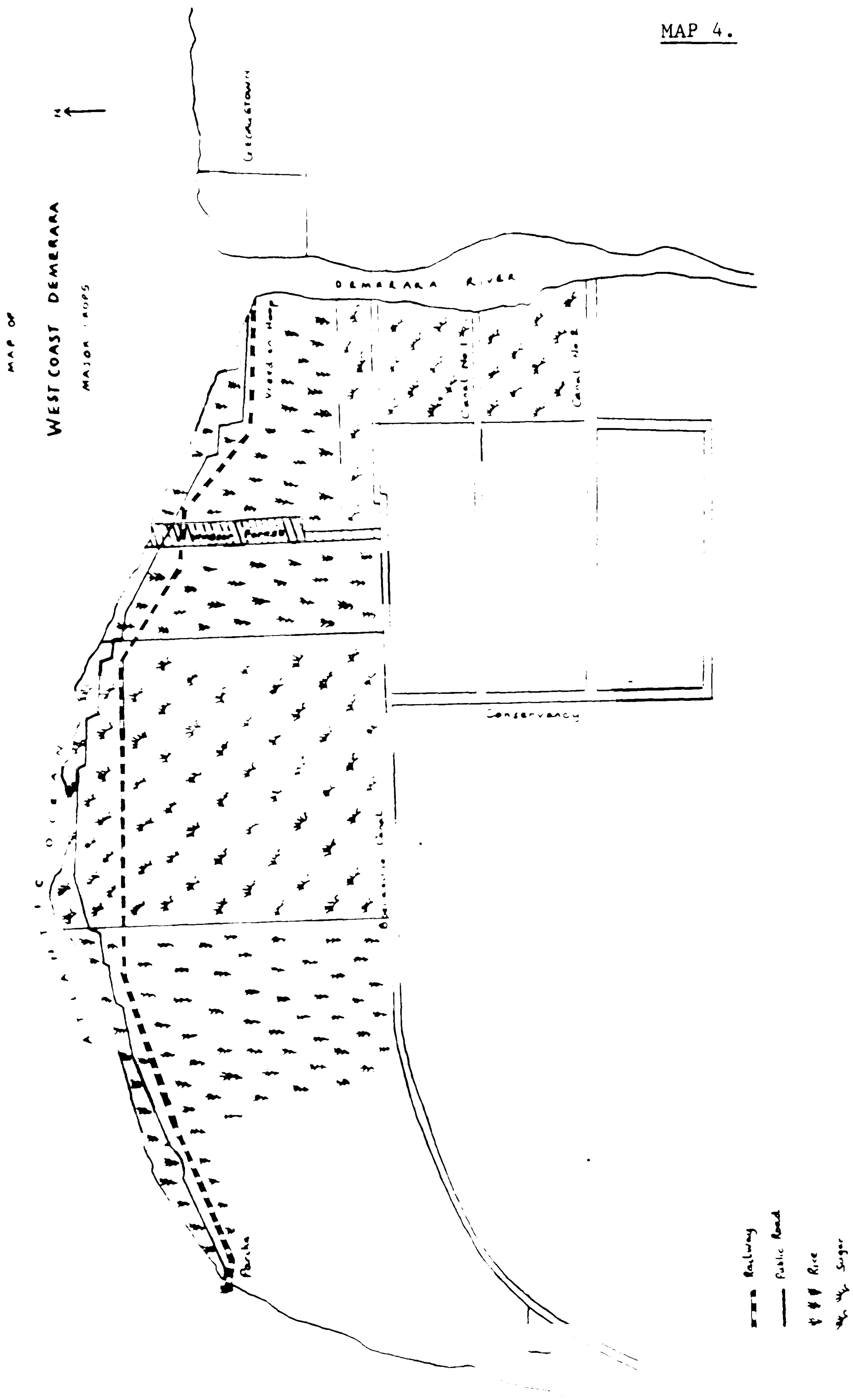
Windsor Forest has a number of distinctive features that make it a very suitable site for field research (see Maps 3 and 4). It is now one of the oldest Land Settlement Schemes in the country, having been founded in 1912 and as a result of this has always been provided with excellent drainage and irrigation facilities as part of the terms under which the farmers lease their land. The costs of maintaining the complex drainage and irrigation system are very high, yet this is essential for agriculture to take place at all, since the coastal plain is below sea level at high tide and constantly faces the threat of inundation. It is therefore difficult for peasant farmers to support such an extensive and complex system, which makes Windsor Forest all the more unusual, in that the farmers have this problem solved for them by the Drainage and Irrigation Board, and at very low cost. The net result of this is that Windsor Forest, and the adjoining estate of La Jalousie, are very productive rice growing areas which offer what is technically one of the best environments in which to practise peasant farming. This is reflected in the way in which the official agricultural agencies consider the farmers in this area to be very conscientious and 'professional'. Windsor Forest therefore seemed an ideal site to study the benefits of improved returns from cash-crop rice cultivation.

It is also the largest 'Indian' community in the area, with a total population of 2,848, of whom 2,772 are Indians (making it 97% Indian). There are much larger settlements on either side of Windsor Forest, but these are either sugar estates, as in the case of the settlements to the west, or are communication centres, such as Vreed en Hoop to the east. This tends to make these areas much more cosmopolitan than

the peasant farming villages. The nearest village of comparable size to Windsor Forest was Den Amstel, some two miles away, which was almost entirely African, one of the few remaining ex-slave villages that were founded immediately after emancipation. Partly because of its distinctive character and unique position, Windsor Forest also had something of a reputation as a centre of 'Indian culture', which in part seems to have stemmed from the expression of the sense of ethnic pride that was sweeping through the Indian population in the 1950s, stimulated by their increasing involvement on the national political stage. Windsor Forest therefore seemed to offer an ideal situation in which to study the expression of Indian ethnic identity.

Finally, Windsor Forest offered the additional feature of being within travelling distance of Georgetown. Although the road system of Guyana is rudimentary, with the main coastal communities only being connected by a good tar road in the early 1970s, travel was frequent. Also no community, with the possible exception of those in Essequibo, was remote from Georgetown. Nevertheless I felt that if the village were to be open to new ideas these might be more readily available in the city. It was only when I started fieldwork that I discovered that this rural/urban dichotomy was largely misplaced and was derived from the diffusionist and evolutionary models of social change then current in the discipline. Nowadays it is quite common to meet people in the rural areas, some of whom not only have an intimate knowledge of the city, and who also go there frequently, but also others who have a comparable knowledge of New York, Toronto and London.

MAP 4.



The urban areas are importantly different to the rural areas, but as I discovered later, these differences are at an altogether more subtle level than that posited by the conventional rural/urban models of social change. The city is also important to Windsor Forest, though again in ways that I had not originally anticipated. As the fieldwork began I also discovered that several other of the perceptions with which I had started were misplaced. In particular I found that the model of economic development through the expansion of the rice industry with which I had started was now out-dated, having been overtaken by events. Specifically, the profitability of the rice industry had declined, partly because of the patterns of investment that had taken place in the preceding decades, and partly because of the change of Government. I thus found, as many anthropologists had done before me, that I was studying a somewhat different situation to the one that I had originally set out to investigate.

The most apparent change was that the village had moved over to a level of mechanised rice cultivation that I had not anticipated, which had in turn had the effect of displacing labour from cultivation activities. This in turn had led to a marked trend to full-time employment out of the community, but this had not followed the traditional pattern of casual labour on the sugar estates or for the Public Works Department. Rather the trend was towards urban employment in Georgetown. This marked a radical change from the traditional pattern of Indian villagers, and furthermore had significant implications as far as the Guyanese system of ethnic economic specialisation was concerned.

I therefore found myself addressing the following issues:

1) Economic Change in Winsdsor Forest.

At the time of his original study Smith had not been optimistic about the economic prospects for the farmers of the village, as they were caught between a booming population and a finite supply of land. He had expected a form of 'agricultural involution' (Geertz 1968) to take place, with the increasing intensification of cultivation to support an ever larger population (R.T.Smith 1957:519). However, this manifestly had not happened and I wanted to know why.

2) The Context of Decision Making.

It was apparent that a good deal of technical innovation had taken place in the rice sector and I wanted to investigate how this had occurred and what had been the consequences. Unfortunately I was not able to observe some of the most crucial decisions, those concerning mechanisation, since they had been taken some time before, but decisions about important matters such as the variety of padi to plant were still being taken and I tried to examine these. One thing was very clear, and that was that although the farmers were taking decisions about large sums of money and possibly risking their livelihood, they were not taking these decisions alone.

In part they were taking them in the context of the community, polling the opinions of others to reach a consensus, but also they were taking them within a context of forces external to the community. The rice industry was bound up in a complex web of inter-connecting interests, ranging from the Rice Marketing Board and other Government agencies, through the multi-national companies who imported the equipment on which

the industry had become so dependent, to the West Indian governments who arranged the prices to be paid for the exported rice and ultimately to the metropolitan countries who provided the aid funding that was not only used to purchase the rice in some cases, but also used in Guyana to expand and improve the industry. Thus the farmers of Windsor Forest were operating within a context of powerful external pressures and I wished to examine this context and the processes involved.

3) Political Ethnicity.

As was mentioned above, immediately preceding the fieldwork there had been a time of intense political and racial hostility in the country, which had culminated in the fall from power of the Peoples Progressive Party, which was considered the 'Indian' party. The 'African' Peoples National Congress was now in power and ruling an independent Guyana. Given the strong identification of ethnic groups and political parties that exists in Guyana, I expected that this new political climate would have its effects on the 'Indian' village of Windsor Forest, as it already had on the rice industry. Furthermore, the village had just been designated the centre of a new Local Authority, which was something that the villagers had been successfully opposing for almost sixty years. I therefore expected this charged political atmosphere to have an effect on ethnic identity.

4) Modernisation Approaches.

The most common theory of social change is that loosely known as Modernisation. Since the farmers of Windsor Forest were not only engaged in cash-crop farming for export, but had also been doing this for some considerable time, it would be easy

to see them as being 'modern' in their economic outlook. Given also the amount of technical innovation that had taken place in the recent past I intended to try to discover the extent to which modernisation theory could adequately account for the experiences of the Windsor Forest farmers.

5) Ethnicity in Guyana.

In Guyana ethnicity is closely associated with economic and political activity. I would therefore expect that the changes in both of these spheres that had occurred in Windsor Forest would have wider implications for the ethnic system of the country as a whole. In particular the urban areas have traditionally been seen as an African preserve, so that the increasing penetration of rural Indians into urban employment could have an effect on the national system of ethnic relations. This in turn could affect the allocation of Government patronage and public resources, which are so essential for many areas of economic activity, including the rice industry.

From the above I hope that the reader will now be in a position not only to appreciate what the thesis is about, but why it has the title it does. To 'hustle' is a common Guyanese word meaning to be busy, with implications of having to try hard, but without the rather shady connotations it has in North America. Thus, translated into the everyday creole English of the Guyanese rural areas, it becomes a commonly used epithet for the problems of living in the contemporary world, where the pressures are so great that everyone has to keep struggling in order to survive - 'all ah we hustlin now'!

THE FORMAT OF THE THESIS

The Chapters of the thesis are laid out as follows:

Chapter 1: Theoretical Issues in the Study of Guyanese Society.

This Chapter presents an examination of the main theoretical approaches to the study of rural economic and social change. These are discussed in the context of the study of Guyanese society and a model of the workings of ethnicity in that society is presented.

Chapter 2: The History of Windsor Forest.

This Chapter sets out the history of the establishment of Windsor Forest as a Government Land Settlement Scheme in the early years of this century. It examines the motives for the pattern of leasing chosen, which still operates today, and considers the relationship with Government that was created by this arrangement.

Chapter 3: The Traditional System of Production.

With the settlement of the former sugar estate by peasant rice farmers a new pattern of cultivation had to be developed. This Chapter describes this system of production that emerged, which was also the one in operation at the time of Smith's 1956 study.

Chapter 4: Windsor Forest in 1956 and 1972.

This Chapter describes the main social characteristics of the community and its residents. Emphasis is placed on the changes that have occurred since the 1956 study.

Chapter 5: Farming in Windsor Forest.

This Chapter discusses the changes in rice cultivation practices that have recently taken place, particularly the

move to mechanisation. This is viewed in the context of the development of the rice industry as a whole, and the overall economic impact of the innovations is assessed. There is also a discussion of other forms of agricultural activity.

Chapter 6: Work and Business.

One of the most significant changes in the village has been the move to urban employment as an economic substitute for rice farming. This Chapter examines the history of the process and the social characteristics of those involved. There is also a discussion of the implications of this for traditional values.

Chapter 7: The Local Political System.

This Chapter examines political activity in the village in the context of the national political system and the major political changes that have taken place in the preceding decade. There is also a discussion of the concept of political ethnicity and how it is reflected at both the local and national level.

Chapter 8: Conclusions.

This Chapter seeks to draw together the evidence that has been presented in the preceding chapters and re-examines the main research issues in the light of this.

FIELDWORK

The fieldwork was carried out between August 1971 and November 1972, at which point I contracted infective hepatitis and had to return to Edinburgh somewhat prematurely. The research was funded by a grant from the Social Science Research Council (HR 1464) and the University of Edinburgh, who paid my salary during the period of the

fieldwork. Throughout my time in Guyana I was accompanied by my wife and young daughter, both of whom turned out to be invaluable assets in the research situation.

We managed to rent the only vacant house in the village, which was near the railway station. My landlord was the priest of the Hindu temple and initially I spent a good deal of time accompanying him to ceremonies as a way of both observing the rituals and gaining access to people's houses and meeting them. In fact access to the residents did not prove to be a problem, since many remembered Raymond Smith with affection and readily accepted the purpose of my activities. Even so I did continually encounter the standard fieldworker's problem of being suspected as a government spy, coupled with the distinctly Guyanese suspicion of my being a CIA agent!

Apart from two short breaks the whole of the fieldwork period was spent in the village, during which time I conducted traditional participant observation of village life. Because of our ready acceptance I was kept very busy 'participating' in village activities, from the stages of cultivation of rice to religious rituals and political debates. I also paid frequent visits to other neighbouring communities for religious functions and the suchlike, which gave me a good opportunity to compare the different kinds of rural settlements. I also paid visits to Georgetown to see officials in the Ministries, the University and the Government Archives. However, I was in the process of expanding this area of investigation when I was taken ill, with the result that I was not able to conduct all the interviews that I had intended.

The material collected in this manner was supplemented by a detailed census of the village which was conducted by myself and my wife. Part of this was a duplication of that used by Smith in 1956, to ensure comparability, though I added to it considerably to cover newer developments. Altogether 495 schedules were completed and many of the statistics in the thesis derive from this source (see Appendix 5 for a copy of the census schedule).

In addition I was fortunate to be able to pay a brief return visit to Guyana in the summer of 1975 whilst attending a conference in Trinidad. On this occasion I was able to spend a few days in the village, during which time I was able to see clearly the continuation of the innovations that had been underway in 1972, particularly in the field of new rice varieties and the degree of Government patronage that was now flowing into the village. Where appropriate, observations from this visit have been incorporated into the thesis.

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'Rice, Politics and Development in Guyana' in I. Oxaal et. al. (eds) Beyond the Sociology of Development, London, Routledge 1975.

'Mechanised Rice Cultivation: the Experience of an East Indian Community in Guyana' in M. Cross & A. Marks (eds) Peasants, Plantations and Rural Communities in the Caribbean, Leiden, Universities of Leiden and Surrey, 1979.

A NOTE ON CURRENCY

Throughout the thesis currency is quoted in dollars (\$s). Unless stated otherwise this refers to the Guyana dollar (G\$), which until recently was the same as the British West Indies dollar (BWI\$), which was, in turn, the standard unit throughout the British West Indies (BWI).

The Guyana dollar has traditionally had a fixed relationship to the pound Sterling, which was:

4.8 Guyana dollars (G\$) = 1 pound Sterling

This is the rate that is taken to apply throughout the thesis. This therefore gives a pre-decimal value for the G\$ of 4/2d, and a decimal value of 21p. During the time of the fieldwork the world's currencies, including both the pound sterling and the G\$ fluctuated considerably and the G\$ fell in value in relation to the pound, and has fallen further since then. However, for the sake of clarity I feel it would be more helpful if the traditional rate of exchange were adhered to throughout.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF GUYANESE SOCIETY

- Introduction
- General Theories
 - Modernisation
 - Dependency
 - Pluralism
- Ethnicity
- The Study of Guyanese Society
- Summary and Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

Although the study of social change is something that anthropologists and sociologists have been engaged in for a long time, and indeed it can be claimed that is what they have always been engaged in studying, the topic continues to be problematic. The majority of theoretical approaches were developed from a perspective of relatively homogeneous societies and thus have the greatest difficulty in coping with societies that appear to be riven with the most extreme conflicts. Guyana is such a society and with the very varied ethnic mix of its population, combined with the severity of ethnic tensions in the recent past, it poses significant problems for social analysis.

The intention of this Chapter is to examine some of the main theoretical approaches to the topics of social change and economic development that are available and to assess their suitability for the analysis of Guyanese society. The Chapter then goes on to consider the main approaches that have been used by scholars who have offered analyses of Guyana, which leads in turn to a presentation of a model of what I see as the main analytical characteristics of Guyanese society. From this approach emerges the questions that I propose to examine in the remainder of the thesis and the analytical stance that I will be taking.

GENERAL THEORIES

Modernisation

This is the longest established and most commonly used major theoretical perspective in the realm of social change and economic development. It is frequently found as either the explicit or

implicit underpinning of the plans and projections of economists and is frequently referred to by other social scientists, especially in applied fields. In part this wide application is because the formulations of such an approach appear very commonsensical.

The general and diffuse nature of these theories is reflected in the fact that what is regarded as one of the major synthesising documents on the approach was unable to offer a definition of modernisation (Weiner 1966). Others have attempted to do so and have produced a range of solutions that is very wide (Eisenstadt 1966, Hoselitz & Moore 1963, Morse 1969). Some have seen 'modernity' as a characteristic of overall economic systems, whereas others have seen it as a characteristic of people. Some locate it in a specific historical epoch, whereas others see it as an attitude which spans time "... such that the Greeks of Pericles might be called modern" (Rogers 1969:14 n.19). Nevertheless the one feature that is common to all approaches is that the processes of modernisation make traditional societies and systems more complex and more like the advanced industrial societies of the world.

This in turn introduces a contentious element into the theoretical area, for the most advanced industrial societies, and thus the most 'modern', are predominantly western. This has led many commentators to conclude that the processes of modernisation advocated by practitioners of this approach in fact constitute a process of westernisation. When the historical dimensions of European colonialism and the wider concepts of imperialism and neo-imperialism are added, the scope of this interpretation becomes even greater. This criticism is denied (Rogers 1969:14), but is emphasised by others

(Hoogvelt 1978:54; Long 1977; Rhodes 1969).

It has also been pointed out that modernisation theories are essentially evolutionary in that they offer as the goal or target of the process of change the existing industrial countries of the world. Furthermore the extent of 'modernisation' is frequently seen as the extent to which the societies under study can be said to approximate to the model of the industrial societies. It is this element of unilinear evolutionism that often lies at the heart of accusations of ideological tendentiousness. The main justification for this element in the modernisation approach derives in varying ways from the work of Weber. In particular his examination of the development of rational bureaucracy and the tendency of more complex systems to become more rational in their formal organisation are seen as the fundamental forces at work in processes of change. At the same time there was the influence of Weber's emphasis on individual motivation and values in his work on the Protestant Ethic. However this view of the 'inevitability of bureaucracy' appears often to be a rule of thumb generalisation or assumption rather than a clearly reasoned theory of social causality.

In addition to a diversity of levels on which the analysis is seen to operate, there is also a diversity of foci for the observation and evaluation of the process. Thus there is often a focus, on the part of economists in particular, on the structural characteristics of the economy and the extent to which the traditional aspects inhibit movement to a more 'modern' one. With this approach emphasis is placed on determining the 'obstacles to development' and how these are to be removed. Economists writing in this vein talk of the need to

improve sectors of the economy such as financial services, labour supply, communications, transportation etc. Given the fact that the modernisation process cannot take place all at once, the emphasis of such writing is often on determining ways of modifying or eliminating the main bottlenecks and inhibitors in the economy. Furthermore, since the problem of the major transformation of economies is such a mammoth task the evaluation of such programmes frequently ends by considering why the desired transformation has not taken place and what further steps have to be taken to achieve it.

However, given the enormity of the problems associated with the successful transformation of whole economies, it is also common to see this as a very long term goal which remains in the far distance and for attention to be focused more on the processes of modernisation currently at work. Such an investigation tends to reveal a situation of a 'modern' sector of the economy, usually under expatriate control, but set in the context of a much larger traditional economy. The frequency with which this situation is found has led to the formulation of the 'dual economy' thesis (Boeke 1953), by which it is recognised that not only do the two forms of economy co-exist in the interim period, but are also likely to do so for some considerable time to come. Thus the focus of interest now becomes the relationships between the two forms that emerge and the extent to which one influences or impedes the other. As Nettl has pointed out, there is in this activity the assumption that "developing countries are infant or deviant examples of the western experience and can be studied in terms of shortfall from a norm" (1967:193).

An alternative approach of modernisationists is to concentrate on value orientation rather than on the structural characteristics. With

this approach the central factor is seen to be the values of the individual actors and the extent to which they exhibit 'modern' characteristics, since it is felt that from this will flow forms of social action that will move the society and the economy towards the more modern pole. In particular Inkles (1960) stresses the need for the appreciation of 'modern' attitudes of mind as the crucial determinant of modernisation. These centre on a number of key orientations, such as a willingness to make rational investment plans for the future, a faith in the benefits of science and technology and a faith in the political institutions of the actor's society. Associated with these are also desirable personal habits like punctuality, as well as a confidence in the benefits to be obtained in the future. This approach based on individual motivation is most evident in the work of McClelland, with his concept of 'need for achievement' as the spur which drives individuals on (1961).

This modern value orientation is often seen as being propagated by specific agencies, such as the education system, agricultural extension officers, health workers and the mass media, and indeed there are many examples of societies that have set up programmes with precisely these aims and using precisely these methods. On the other hand such values are also often seen as being associated with particular sectors of the economy and with certain institutional areas of society. Thus there is frequent reference to the way that the logic and rationality of the modern and dynamic business sector of the developing economy acts as a source of such values. At the same time it must not be forgotten that this sector is frequently controlled by expatriate businesses and staffed by expatriate personnel. Similarly the towns and cities are talked about as sources of 'urban' and

'modern' values, since they are often the places where the modern industrial sectors are located and where the material adjuncts to 'modern' life, such as taxis, cinemas, cars and television are to be found (Hoselitz 1961).

The utility of this theoretical approach has been increasingly doubted over recent years. For in addition to the ideological suspicions already referred to there is the very real problem of trying to predict the exact mix of prerequisites for rapid economic growth and transformation (Lerner 1967; Smelser 1968). Despite all the efforts of economists, planners and aid agencies that have been expended on the traditional societies of the world there have been very few cases of successful 'development' that have resulted. Part of the problem is that modernisation theory does not adequately deal with the issue of power within the system, in fact it ignores it almost entirely.

In the case of Guyana the general thesis of modernisation theory would appear to be largely redundant. For the general theory was devised to apply to traditional tribal and peasant economies that were in the process of being converted to market-based economies. However, Guyana, as an immigrant-based society, was not only based on, but actually created by, the market economy. The forms of 'unfree labour' (Rex 1973) that were brought to the country to work on the sugar plantations now form the majority of the population. Therefore the ex-slaves and indentured Indians were very familiar with the nature of the cash economy, external trade and technologically based production as a result of their experiences with the sugar industry.

Thus the original settlers of Windsor Forest at the time it was taken over by Government were clearly intent on engaging in a particular type of commercial agriculture. They were not looking for purely subsistence farming - those who wanted that tended to go to the interior and settle on the river banks. Rather they were planning to plant rice for sale elsewhere in the country. As will be discussed further in Chapter 5, at this time in the history of the rice industry the country had just become self-sufficient in rice and there were even the prospects for a small export trade. Thus the market-oriented strategy of the early settlers was quite apparent and the speed with which they snapped up the early leases, and the tenacity with which they defended them, indicates an investment-oriented approach that is thoroughly 'modern'.

However this was not as simple or as open an issue as one might imagine from a conventional modernisation standpoint, for the Indian peasants had only a partial involvement in the economic world of British Guiana at the time. They were constrained by financial considerations which meant that the scope for the operation of their economic aspirations was restricted. Furthermore they were constrained by the institutional structure and attitudes of the colonial economic system. This is well illustrated by the way in which the Sandbach Parker Co. was very willing to co-operate with the colonial government to help foil the plans of Boodhoo to acquire Windsor Forest in 1917, as will be described more fully in Chapter 2, and one presumes that there were many other similar instances. Thus it is the failure of modernisation theories to take account of the operation of this power dimension that represents one of their main deficiencies.

On the other hand the emphasis that such theories place on values is potentially useful. Unfortunately much of this emphasis turns out to be oriented towards a 'hearts and minds' focus for use in association with programme propaganda. Even the most renowned theoretical formulation in this area, that of McClelland (1961), with his emphasis on the concept of 'need achievement' and the role he sees it playing in the processes of change, has been heavily criticised. Furthermore the notions of cultural osmosis that seem to underlie talk of the spread of 'urban values' and 'the demonstration effect' are unspecific and almost presented as self-evident.

In addition to these problems associated with the application of the concept of 'modernisation' to the realm of values, there is also the difficulty of the exact duration of the modernisation process at this level. Thus this school of thought tends to see modernisation as a 'once-and-for-all' process, so that once members of traditional societies are 'modern' then they are completely so and can be assumed to have the basic orientation towards innovations and the market economy that characterises the advanced industrial societies. The evidence from my study indicates that the situation is far more complex than this and that such simplistic assumptions are not valid.

Nevertheless ideas and values manifestly do spread. As we shall see in Chapters 5 & 6, the village of Windsor Forest was open to the inflow of many new ideas about how rice should be planted and harvested, new values on the economic role of women, the acceptability of forms of fashionable dress and the desirability of consumer durables. These were disseminated into the local community through

numerous information agencies ranging from the most formal, such as the education system, to the more informal and voluntaristic, such as newspapers, the radio and films. In particular popular media such as radio and films had a great influence because of their high popularity.

Most of these values and criteria were strikingly similar to those exhibited by Afro-Guyanese of the same socio-economic strata and the values of the two sections on such matters as the desirability of prestige possessions were almost identical. Some goods were the self same ones that were avidly sought in the industrial societies and to this extent all share in the desire for the convenience products of the industrial system. As R.T.Smith has pointed out:

"In Guyana extremes of wealth and poverty are less extreme than some places in the hemisphere but the same cars, refrigerators, washing machines, radios, and Scotch whisky are there, symbolising position, prestige, wealth and 'modernity'."

(R.T.Smith 1970:425)

On the other hand there were also similar values about other matters such as dress and leisure activities, the desirability of maintaining frequent contact with kin and the need to be a frequent attender at religious functions that were distinctly Guyanese.

In such a context it seems that the blanket term 'modern' is not very helpful in seeking to distinguish the factors which lie behind the emergence and acceptance of these values. Nevertheless the emphasis on values is important, as long as we can find an improved explanatory framework that incorporates the processes involved in the inculcation of these values and their operation within the society.

Dependency

Structural dependency theory bids fair to provide just such a solution, precisely because it seeks to tackle one of the central problems of modernisation theory - the failure of underdeveloped economies to develop. The beguiling response offered by dependency theory is that such economies do not develop because the already developed economies and societies prevent them from doing so. From this perspective 'underdevelopment' is not a transitional stage on the way to the goal of full 'development', as modernisation theory claims, but rather it is a deliberately created situation which maintains the underdeveloped economies in a perpetually dependent relationship with the developed economies. Thus the dependent economies are seen as being preserved as suppliers of raw materials and cheap labour for the developed economies, whilst at the same time being captive markets for the products of the latter. Thus they are not allowed to become independently industrialised, nor to engage in economic activities not within the sphere of the metropolitan economies.

This approach, which not only accounts for the failure of modernisation theory but also contains the power dimension missing from the latter, has been associated with radical critics of capitalism. In particular it has been developed and examined from the standpoint of Marxist economics. The approach is frequently held to have emerged from the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) school and its failure in the post-war world to make import substitution an effective answer to the continent's economic needs. Furthermore much of the writing on dependency continues to be within the context of Latin America.

Andre Gunder Frank is generally held to be the original and archetypal writer in this approach, and is often credited with the creation of the structural dependency school of analysis. This approach has had enormous popularity and has produced a number of variants, many of which are in sharp disagreement with each other. Thus there are now a number of scholars who, whilst working in the same area and with generally the same theoretical perspective as Frank, radically differ with his interpretation of certain key concepts (Amin 1976; Dos Santos 1973; Wallerstein 1974; Booth 1975).

Nevertheless there is general agreement that the essential feature of the dependent economy is the lack of independent capital investment, the over-specialisation on the production of raw materials for export and the domination of the economy by foreign interests. The source of this approach lay in the appreciation that the traditional view (of under-development being the base line from which all societies approached the problem of development) was unsatisfactory. The evidence of the extent to which the developed countries drained the wealth of the under-developed countries and the extent to which the development of the former was seen to be at the expense of the latter was also relevant. The dominant position of the central economies meant that there was now no possibility of autonomous capital accumulation, and hence development, in the peripheral economies. This in turn led to the idea that the only effective way for peripheral economies to develop autonomously was to 'disengage' from the world capitalist system.

The dynamic factor in this system is the pursuit of class interests by the bourgeoisies of the metropolitan and dependent societies.

However, for his synoptic view of the whole system Frank has an over-arching model of the metropolitan/satellite relationship. This he applies to all situations, in which he sees it working in essentially the same way. Thus the metropole exploits the satellite economy because the dominant elite of the metropole controls the economic enterprises involved. However, within the satellite economy the model still holds, for the bourgeoisie of the capital city are able to exploit the remainder of the country in the same way that they are in turn exploited by the metropole. Thus as far as the internal economy is concerned they constitute the metropole and the hinterland the satellite.

Hence for Frank the bourgeoisie of dependent economies have the peculiar characteristic of being a class that faces two ways at once - they are at one and the same time the exploited and the exploiters. This model has been criticised on a number of counts, including Frank's rather strange definition of capitalism which is based on exchange rather than production (Laclau 1971). Furthermore there is also the criticism that Frank has relatively little to say about how this grand design is to be operationalised and the processes analysed - the overall structure is mapped out, but the specific mechanisms are distinctly vague. Nevertheless it is possible to apply this model more effectively, as Hechter (1975) has shown, though in a very different context. This is an issue that will be discussed further later.

Finally there is the question of the driving force of this heavily interconnected system. For Frank it is capitalism, but within the terms of his own model capitalism takes on some characteristics that

others have found difficult to accept. Thus for him Spain was essentially capitalist at the time of the conquest of Latin America in the 16th Century, and so, since the latter has been involved in trade with the outside world since then, Latin America has been capitalist since the 16th Century (Frank 1967).

Despite the fact that a number of analysts find it hard to accept this and other aspects of the Frank model (Booth 1975; Cardoso 1972; Foster-Carter 1974; Leys 1977; O'Brien 1975; Taylor 1979), dependency continues to be a very attractive theoretical approach. For it offers the inestimable advantage of dealing with power relations. Thus the activities of governments in setting up loan schemes and development projects, tariff systems and subsidies could all be incorporated into the one explanatory schema. Furthermore the dependency approach allowed an attempt at what is often seen as the looming major issue in development; given that the advanced countries had successfully made the transition to industrial economies, was the process to be repeated in the rest of the world? The dependency approach tended to deny the possibility of autonomous development in the Third World and stressed the virtual impossibility of bridging the gap between the developed and underdeveloped nations.

In addition one of the main foci of interest in the study of the operation of the international economic system was that of the activities and effects of the Multi National Corporations (MNCs). Fear of the power and scope of these organisations had already been expressed in the developed world (Tugendhat 1973) where they appeared to be beyond the control of even those governments. In the underdeveloped world their role was even more significant, since they

frequently dominated the export sector of a nation's economy and often almost entirely composed the 'modern' sector. They thus constituted one of the most powerful agencies for change in a country. There also emerged an increasing amount of evidence that their effect on a country was not always beneficial (Thomas 1974; Baran & Sweezy 1966; Magdoff 1972). The economy became unbalanced, the scope for local entrepreneurs was reduced and the import element continued to rise. Furthermore there were suspicions that the corporations manipulated their internal accounting arrangements in order to avoid having to pay revenue to the countries producing the raw materials as these were moved to other branches of the organisation overseas (Vaitzos 1973; Hoozevelt 1978:85-95).

The role of such metropolitan capital investment in the economies of the Caribbean has always been crucial, since it was the prospect of making huge profits from meeting the demand for sugar in Europe that first brought expatriate enterprises to the region. Furthermore with the importation of slaves and indentured labour to meet the labour needs of the plantations the very societies themselves are the creation of these same economic interests. Also the smaller capitalist plantation and related activities of previous ages have over time gradually been amalgamated to become part of the plethora of large corporations that are active in the area. The most noteworthy of these are Tate & Lyle and Bookers McConnell, both of whom had a dominant interest in the sugar industries of Trinidad and Guyana respectively, as well as many other interests throughout the region. The dominance of Bookers in Guyana was so great that the standard local joke was that the universal abbreviation for the Colony's name, 'B.G.' stood, not for British Guiana, but rather for 'Bookers Guiana'.

Thus it was inevitable that the Caribbean should be used as a test-case for dependency analysis (Girvan 1973; Cumper 1974; Jefferson 1972; Oxaal 1975).

The distinctive and unique features of Caribbean economies have attracted the attention of economists and sociologists, with the focus of attention being the institution of the plantation (though as Cumper (1974) points out, there has been a tendency on the part of some dependency writers to ignore the contributions of the plantation economists, a deficiency which he very much deprecates). Plantations are unusual organisations since they operate on a large scale, but are located in the rural areas, a relatively unusual place for such a large amount of investment. Furthermore the resources they mobilise are predominantly land and labour rather than capital, and the mobilisation of labour has always been their most critical aspect. It was labour needs that brought the immigrant populations that compose the majority of the region, so that in a broad swathe from the north-east coast of Brazil, through the Caribbean to the southern USA the dominant economic institution has long been the plantation. These produced a range of tropical products, sugar, coffee, cotton and other items needed by the industrial world. It was thus appropriate for Wagley (1960) to refer to this area as 'Plantation America'.

The continued dominance of this institution in Caribbean societies has led in turn to attempts by economists to determine the effects it has had on the economies concerned. Beckford (1972), Mandle (1972) and Best & Levitt (1968; 1975) have attempted to produce a construct called the Plantation Economy Model, with the avowed aim of trying to produce an analytical framework that will allow effective planning to break out of the disadvantage associated with economies in which

plantations play a dominant role. Although this enterprise has been criticised for its failure to offer, in particular, a predictive analysis suitable for economic planning (Pantin 1980), it is nevertheless seen as "a substantial contribution to the analysis of the Caribbean economy" (ibid:11).

The Plantation Economy Model is associated with a wider concept, that of the Plantation Society, which incorporates an analysis of not only the effects of plantations on the economy but also on the society as a whole. As Beckford states "The plantation influence can be traced almost directly in every important aspect of social life in the plantation societies of the world" (1972:60). The dominance of the plantation has led to certain structural characteristics of the plantation economy, which in turn inhibit the emergence of alternative forms. Thus although the produce of the plantations was agricultural it was a product for export and not necessarily related to the needs of the producing society. The almost total commitment to this end, combined with the utilisation of the best land and other scarce resources, produced an unbalanced pattern of agricultural activity.

Thus despite their agricultural base it is common for the plantation societies to be considerable importers of food for internal consumption, whilst at the same time exporting food crops such as sugar. Plantations are crop production factories and in the past it was more 'economic' for the planters to concentrate their resources and activities on the profitable enterprise of producing sugar alone, rather than diversifying into food production to support the plantation population. However this practice has left an economic pattern that is not necessarily advantageous for an independent

nation, especially when the Government is seeking to develop alternative economic structures.

Thus even today 90% of the protein requirement of Trinidad is imported (Pantin 1980:22). Similarly in Guyana one of the main 'African' food items has traditionally been salt fish, but despite the fact that Guyana's waters abound with fish, these are not the source of this food. Rather it was imported from Canada, from which country, in the early days of the plantations, it was easier for the owner to import the fish in combination with the existing export of sugar. Thus slave manpower could be devoted to sugar production rather than being dissipated on food production. From this the pattern grew and remained, so that any attempt by Government to restrict this drain on foreign exchange was most unpopular. However the importation of salt fish was finally banned by the Government in 1972 as part of a package that included 104 food items that could no longer be imported, an indication of the extent to which the society was dependent on external food sources.

This indicates another distinctive characteristic of the Plantation Society: the extent to which the economic institutions are very specialised, being based round the monocrop cultivation that forms the basis of the economy (Dumont 1963). This therefore has a very unbalanced appearance, with the plantations and associated institutions such as banks, machinery suppliers, importers and some forms of transport being highly developed, whilst other areas of the economy are likely to be markedly different in scale and to be relatively undeveloped. This continues to be a characteristic of societies such as Guyana. Associated with this is the level

of technology imported and available. Here again the plantations and their needs tend to dominate the situation, with the result that there is very sophisticated technology available for the plantation enterprise but that the extent to which this had any wider stimulus is very limited. Thus the overall benefit to the society of having all these expensive structures and items of equipment is marginal. Similarly the staff who man these processes may be highly trained, but they are also very specialised and again the benefit to the wider society of these advanced skills is very limited -if anything it equips them rather to emigrate to the advanced economies where their specialist skills will have a wider market.

Thus it is possible to find, as in Guyana, sophisticated and specialised machine shops capable of repairing machinery from the sugar estates, but comparatively little else. The engineering infrastructure that one might have expected to be associated with such sophisticated engineering did not exist outside the plantations, with the result that the production of anything other than the most elementary engineering items was not possible. Similarly the economic infrastructural investment tends to reflect the dominance of the plantations, so that there is investment in docks and terminals for the export of sugar, roads to plantations and public works to ensure water supplies for cultivation, for example. In contrast the level of public investment for other areas of the economy has traditionally been very low.

In some ways this looks like the dual economy thesis in another form, but in fact there is a crucial difference. In that formulation

the emphasis is on a 'modern' sector which is operating in the context of a surrounding 'traditional' economic system which can, in many ways, maintain its autonomous existence. However in the plantation societies of the New World this traditional sector does not really exist, since the only source of this would be the original indigenous inhabitants. For the vast majority of the population of these societies is descended from the plantation labour brought to the country by the international enterprises of the past, and was thus enmeshed in the 'modern' economy from the start.

The population not associated with the plantation sector is essentially marginal to the plantation economy. This is especially true of the allocation of resources, for the dominant role of the plantation ensures that they have the best land, the highest level of capital investment, the most skilled employees and frequently the highest level of public assistance. By contrast the non-plantation sectors are relatively disadvantaged and thus there is little scope for the emergence of an indigenous entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. Rather the bourgeoisie tends to be composed of traders, importers, government employees and service professionals.

Pluralism

One of the objections that can be raised against both the modernisation and dependency approaches is that they are too economically deterministic, especially the latter, with the result that they can be seen as lacking a social and cultural dimension that appears to be offered by pluralism. This approach has been applied to the Caribbean for some time, for from its origins with the work of Furnival on the Dutch East Indies it was developed by M.G. Smith in the

Caribbean context(1965). Furthermore Despres' study of Guyana (1967) is presented specifically in terms of pluralism.

Pluralism is an attempt to provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of multi-cultural societies such as those found in the Caribbean and focuses on the extent to which the different cultural sections of the society share institutional areas. This focus arose from the work of Furnival, an economist, who noted that in the Dutch East Indies the markedly different cultural traditions contained within the colonial empire were not held together by unifying bonds of solidarity, but were constrained by external forces. These he saw as being economic self-interest and the imposed force of the colonial power, with the result that the market place was the main common point of contact. This in turn meant that the peoples of such societies 'mingle but do not combine' in his famous phrase (Furnival 1948), and the problem arises as to what prevents these societies from falling apart. With the ending of formal colonialism throughout much of the world such issues came more sharply to the fore and were influential in the emergence of the pluralism thesis.

The approach of M.G. Smith is to define the 'compulsory' institutions of a cultural section and to see the extent to which these are shared by other sections in the society. However it has been pointed out that when one applies Smith's definition of compulsory institutions that "...embraces kinship, education, religion, property and economy, recreation and certain sodalities" (1965:82) those within the core are so comprehensive that there are few possible areas in institutional activity left to be included in the alternative category of 'alternative' institutions that are shared



with other sections. The societies in which these ethnic groups reside can, in turn, exhibit degrees of incorporation of ethnic groups, with a distinction between 'differential incorporation' which involves divisions of status between ethnic groups, and 'consociation' which is based on segmentation with equality.

Furthermore the institutional structure allows the distinction between characteristics of social pluralism, which involves the differential involvement of ethnic groups in the overall social system, and cultural pluralism, which focuses on differences in cultural value systems. The two can vary independently of each other. This distinction between social and cultural pluralism is one that was taken up by van den Berghe (1967) and applied widely to a number of multi-ethnic situations. Although it produced a useful descriptive typology the overall explanation was lacking, in that it continued to be based on the notion of a pure 'pre-existing' ethnicity that underlies the notion of pluralism, and as such was unable to account for the variations in cultural emphasis to be found in multi-ethnic societies.

The problems of applying this approach to an actual society and to specific communities in particular is brought out in Despres' study. The system of ethnic differences resulted in the 'minimal cultural section' which for Despres consisted of "a culturally differentiated group functioning within the context of the local community" (1967:118). According to the M.G.Smith approach this differentiation from other sections within the community would be by institutional activities. But "...the question as to how culturally different particular groups have to be in order to consider them separately

implies a continuum for which anthropologists have not yet devised appropriate measures. In the absence of such measures qualitative evaluations may be made in terms of structural data" (ibid:119). This admission seems to weaken the approach considerably and what follows (Table 16 p.119) is a rather vague chart based on value judgements to put institutional activities in one of three categories. These judgements are not only vague, but can also be contested, so that to classify 'Educational Activities' as an area of institutional activity that falls into the category of 'Valid for all groups but modified by some' is not only grossly to over-simplify a very complex area of social life, but also to ignore the standardised state educational structure and its influence.

Furthermore Despres' approach produces a rather simplistic and dichotomous classification that parallels that offered for the village. Thus institutional structures are seen as 'belonging' to one section or another. In fact reality is considerably more complicated than this, and whilst it is possible to allocate a formal organisation to a political party (they struggle specifically for this) it is much more difficult to allocate national institutional areas to ethnic groups. In addition this type of analysis ignores important areas of common practice, of which by far the most important is that of language. Although there are some items of vocabulary that are peculiar to a specific ethnic group (though not many), the argot of rural areas, though deeply impenetrable to outsiders is totally intelligible to all other Guyanese. Apart from the most esoteric ethnic areas, such as religion, (though even here there has been considerable modification (R.T.Smith 1962:140) there is no bar to linguistic communication throughout the country.

As has frequently been pointed out (Cross 1968) the M.G. Smith view of pluralism is essentially functionalist and static, since it refers back to aspects of core cultural identity that are held to be unchanging. Thus despite its association with conflict situations and newly emergent societies, it is essentially a conservative approach. This is largely due to the fact that pluralism is predicated on a view of ethnic identity as an unmodified 'given' that endures over time and space. This is too rigid an orientation and is ultimately unsatisfactory, in that it is unable to cope with the modifications to ethnicity wrought by the Plantation Society.

In the case of Guyana the experience of the plantation society has heavily modified the two main ethnic sections. Although they were named after the geographical origins of the ancestors of the present members, neither Africans nor Indians represented the cultural characteristics of the original immigrants. It is precisely for this reason that Mintz in his famous phrase has termed the peasantries of the New World as 'reconstituted peasantries'. Thus as R.T. Smith has pointed out (1962, 1966, 1970) all the immigrant ethnic groups brought to Guyana for plantation work were shorn of their 'inconvenient' cultural characteristics to fit them more easily into the production process, whilst at the same time being socialised into the values of creole society in varying ways. The effects of this have been summarised by Horowitz as follows:

"In large measure, the relatively undivided Indian identity in Guyana and Trinidad can be attributed to the leveling effects of the brutal and intense West Indian plantation experience."

(Horowitz 1975:129)

Similarly, it has long been R.T. Smith's claim that the ethnic groups

of Guyana have more in common than they have differences, and, more importantly, they have an identical class position vis a vis the international economic order that dominates the society.

In this view the ethnic differences, though real enough on the surface, are not as fundamental as they are often portrayed as being. Thus they do not serve to mark off separate cultural traditions with markedly different views of the world, as the M.G. Smith view would have us believe, but rather act as expressive markers of the boundaries of ethnic groups originally delineated and legitimated by the colonial society and later entrenched in the 'ecological niches' of the economy. It is largely because of the Guyanese habit, derived from colonial times, of thinking (and acting) in terms of ethnic collectivities that these groupings have real significance in the society.

Plantations are also 'total institutions'. Smith has borrowed this term from Goffman to describe the strongly authoritarian nature of the organisation (1967:230). From the beginning the coercive element was strongly in evidence, especially, of course, in the case of slavery. However it is noteworthy that Tinker has termed the indenture system that followed it 'A New System of Slavery' (1974). The plantations were relatively isolated and self-contained, with the result that they became total institutions for the inmates and it is not surprising that in the interests of the planters a great many changes were made to the characteristics and beliefs of those involved. In the case of the slaves the process of eradicating African cultural characteristics has been markedly successful throughout the New World, with the result that there are few African cultural 'survivals' to be

found in the Caribbean and southern USA, though the situation is slightly different in Brazil (Elkins 1968; Hoetink 1967).

In the case of Indians the process was somewhat less ruthless, but nevertheless important elements of traditional Indian culture were removed or suppressed in the interests of efficiency on the plantations. Thus the most important item to be given up was the recognition of caste and the operation of the rituals and prohibitions associated with it. These were incompatible with the flexibility needed in the complex industrial organisation of the plantation and so the planters refused to recognise them. Similarly the use of indigenous languages such as Hindi was not in the interests of the enterprise, and so all immigrants were encouraged to learn English and all children were to be taught this at school, with the result that the 'creole English' of Guyana has become the universal means of communication. Thus although there are some old people who are still able to converse in Hindi and there are those who wish to learn it to keep alive what they see as their cultural heritage (or who learn Sanskrit for religious purposes), the vast majority of Guyanese Indians know nothing more than a few words and do not see Hindi as relevant to their lives.

In place of these and other traditional values were inculcated a series of values derived from European culture. In the case of the 'creole culture' that developed amongst the African section of the society these European-oriented values were dominant. On the other hand it can be argued that as far as the Indians of Guyana are concerned they retained a set of distinctively 'Indian' cultural characteristics. Whilst this is true to a certain extent, it must be

realised that these characteristics are not the same as those to be found in 'Mother India' and have in fact been heavily modified through the processes and experiences of the Plantation Society. Furthermore, as R.T. Smith has argued (1962:134-144; 1966; 1970) this process also established in both sections of the population common values about material progress and how to achieve it.

"Things in these societies tended to be judged in terms of a comparison with English culture and English standards and that the whole structure of the society including the ranking system, tended to acquire a 'legitimacy' in terms of these standards and values. 'African' and 'Indian' and 'Chinese' and other sub-cultures existed and still exist, but they have always been evaluated in a general context by comparison with an ideal which was formally 'English' just as particular physical characteristics have been evaluated by reference to a European model."

(R.T.Smith 1966:51)

Thus at the same time the Plantation Society created and maintained social sections which shared many common goals and aspirations, but which at the same time remained sharply antagonistic to each other. As Beckford says "We find therefore that the plantation societies of the New World have the rather unique characteristic of exhibiting both cultural pluralism and social integration" (1972:65).

ETHNICITY

The unsatisfactory nature of the pluralist approach to ethnicity is brought out by Barth (1969) in his revolutionary attempt to move the focus of ethnic analysis from the core elements of a culture and the search for an irreductable minimum definition to that of boundaries and the elements of choice and ascription in ethnic identities. This new perspective changed the approach to ethnicity so utterly that Despres has been moved to comment that "... one is tempted to consider ethnic studies BB and AB (ie Before and After Barth, editor, 1969)"

(1975:189). Incidentally Despres' own work can be most certainly included under this rubric, since his later work exhibits an almost complete movement over to a Barthian approach.

The freedom that this offers to the study of ethnicity is balanced, nevertheless, by the resulting problem of defining just what is an ethnic group (Cohen 1974). The essential features of such a classification would appear to be a cultural component, a sense of joint identity and the perception of this distinctness by others. This is reflected in the classic definition offered by Barth:

"A population which...has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order."
(Barth 1969:11)

Another definition more appropriate to the racial element to be found in Caribbean societies has been offered by Patterson:

"That condition wherein certain members of a society, in a given context, choose to emphasise as their most meaningful basis of primary, extrafamilial identity, certain assumed cultural, national or somatic traits."
(Patterson 1975:308)

In the case of Guyana the question of whether Indians and Africans conform to these criteria hardly arises. For given their radically different geographical origins, traditional cultural characteristics and the variation in their involvement with the Plantation Society, there is ample basis for each to constitute a separate ethnic group. Furthermore the cultural basis of ethnicity also largely parallels physical differences of racial classification, thus offering an additional element that could serve to distinguish the two groups. For, as often happens in multi-racial societies, the recognition of physical differences is also accompanied by the attribution of

cultural, moral and psychological characteristics to the groups concerned. Thus these differences offered the opportunity to provide a simple mechanism for the ascription of persons to a particular ethnic identity.

This aspect was greatly assisted by the operations of the colonial system, which from its own perceptions of racial differences and the moral and cultural characteristics associated with them, continually emphasised these (Bartels 1977; R.T.Smith 1966). Thus, as has been mentioned, it is one of the distinctive characteristics of the Plantation Society that was associated with colonialism in Guyana that on the one hand it put immigrants through a process of cultural homogenisation in many ways, but at the same time overtly operated through a classification of racial and cultural differences. This leads to the kind of social system in which ethnicity has the role described by Barth:

"Common to all these systems is the principle that ethnic identity implies a series of constraints on the kinds of roles an individual is allowed to play, and partners he may choose for different kinds of transactions. In other words, regarded as a status, ethnic identity is superordinate to most other statuses, and defines the permissible constellations of statuses, or social personalities, which an individual with that identity may assume."
(Barth 1969:17)

Nineteenth century writers on Guyana continually stressed the moral and character differences between the Africans and the Indians, and the tradition can still be seen in more recent times, as the writings of Michael Swan, a Colonial Office protege, show:

"The Negro's open character arouses an Englishman's affection more easily than the quiet, sometimes furtive nature of the uneducated Indian - educated Indians are among the most articulate and extroverted people in the Colony. Where the Indian is provident and saves his money cent by cent the African is improvident, spending his money as it comes; where the Indian is gregarious mainly in the market place the African loves to sit talking or singing all night in a rum-shop; where the Indian cares little about his clothes the African will spend his last penny on a new white shirt or a shiny blue satin dress for his daughter."

(Swan 1957:53)

An associated problem is that of the markers of an ethnic identity. If we move from pluralism's emphasis on institutional characteristics to one based more on Barth's concept of boundaries between groups, the range of possible choices for the markers of these boundaries is very wide. As several writers have pointed out (Cross 1978; A.L.Epstein 1978) the selection of the characteristics to serve this purpose can be very arbitrary and are often derived from what is politically significant at the time. The markers can range from language to kinship and marriage and from dress to food habits.

In the case of Guyana there is the additional factor of race. Although there has been a history of race mixing to some extent in the country, which has resulted in a 'coloured' or 'dougla' section, there has been relatively little inter-marriage between Africans and Indians. Thus in general the two main ethnic groups are also physically different. As the quotation from Swan shows, the tendency to attribute ethnic, moral and cultural characteristics on the basis of physical categorisation is something that has a long tradition dating from the earliest colonial times. Thus the ethnic groups in Guyana have a fund of stereotypes about the other groups which they are very willing to articulate and which are commonly used in everyday life.

This in turn means that race is commonly used as a marker of ethnic identity, but, as so often happens in Guyana, the reality is more complex than that. For as Smith has pointed out (1976:206), the stereotypes of racial and ethnic groups tend to be related to those groups in general, whereas in individual cases of interaction the racial element can be over-ridden by personal feelings. Whilst it is likely that this situation was more commonly found before the 'troubles' of the 1960s, it is still nevertheless possible to encounter situations where the actors take no notice of racial characteristics and where common racial stereotypes are not used. Thus race is, in the Guyanese context, merely one of the criteria that can be used to mark off ethnic groups. Its use therefore tends to be situational, though because of the permanent and visible nature of racial characteristics they do tend to be used in the more peripheral encounters.

One of the significant aspects of the ethnic experience in Guyana is the way in which a considerable amount of cultural elision took place under the Plantation Society. Thus not only were the 'inconvenient' cultural characteristics of the immigrants removed by the system, but also ethnic differences within the groups were suppressed. The result is that the considerable range of cultural characteristics that existed within each section of the immigrant population has been largely removed, producing what are essentially two almost monolithic ethnic blocks, Indian and African, which are opposed when Guyanese talk about their society. This is brought out by Horowitz when he said:

"Despite religious, linguistic and caste heterogeneity among the Indian immigrants, the Indian population was treated as if it were composed of essentially fungible entities, with no significant ascriptive differences recognised. This was the treatment most compatible with the requirements of managing a relatively undifferentiated labor force. Colonial policies and stereotypes thus helped to solidify the Indian identity as against competing sub-group identities and to demarcate it sharply from the Negro or Creole identity."

(Horowitz 1975:129)

Within the Indian section the only significant cultural differences are those that derive from religion, and even here there has been a good deal of accommodation in the interests of harmonious community relations (R.T. Smith 1962:141). This has resulted in the common adoption of the word 'church' to denote a Hindu temple, the allocation of public holidays to the major festivals of each of the main religions and the moving of Hindu weddings to Sunday daytime to allow easier attendance. Thus the only other significant difference is that which denotes those of south-Indian origin, the 'Madrassies' as they are known. This distinctiveness, however, is also marked in much the same way as in the wider society, with such people being supposed to be darker skinned than the north-Indians and practising a different form of Hinduism.

A further complication, and by far the most significant, is the problem of how and why ethnic identities continue to exist. The answers to this question can be very varied, depending on the situation in the society under study, but even when attempts have been made to produce some descriptive generalisation or explanatory synthesis there has been a range of possibilities suggested. Patterson has set his criteria widely within social life and suggested three principles at work:

"...there are three basic principles determining the relative choice of allegiances, including ethnic allegiances. These are: the principle of reconciliation (or least conflict) of interest; the principle of optimization of interests; and the principle of the primacy of class interest."
(Patterson 1975:311)

This set of principles is essentially derived from the individualistic approach to society, and in this case is particularly useful in dealing with a multi-ethnic society such as Guyana. It also has the advantage of enabling a focus on the extent to which members of such societies are able to choose forms of identity and expression. However, as Cross has pointed out, it is not clear from Patterson's paper just why he attributes such primacy to class interests (1978:43).

A similar emphasis on economic factors is also laid by Despres in his later analyses of Guyanese society. Mention has already been made of the early work of this writer which was based on the M.G. Smith model of the plural society (Despres 1967). With the publication of Barth's new view of ethnicity Despres became an enthusiastic convert and has since emphasised one of Barth's concepts, that of 'ecological niche'. Part of the Barth model was an emphasis on the extent to which in traditional societies separate ethnic identities were associated with distinct ecological zones (1969), and Despres has applied this perspective to the Guyanese situation (1975).

Thus he has argued that the African population has tended to form the bulk of the urban working class and has dominated areas of economic activity such as the docks, manufacturing and transport. Even within the rural areas they have tended to concentrate on skilled employment on the sugar estates. They have also tended to dominate

the more prestigious white collar occupations that required formal education, such as the civil service, education and specialist agencies (Roberts 1965). The Indian population, on the other hand, has tended to remain predominantly rural, concentrating on rice and sugar activities, along with other forms of agricultural activity such as cattle rearing. In Despres's view this degree of economic and spatial segregation served to deflect the full force of ethnic competition for resources, by ensuring that both ethnic sections were able to maintain a degree of isolated distance and to preserve an economic base for the continuation of their separate identities. As long as the two groups remained in their ecological niches, there was less likelihood of conflict, but if the boundaries of one of these sections was crossed, then the possibility of ethnic competition for resources would take place.

Cross too has emphasised the degree of economic separation that exists in Guyana, though he has also allied this to a new model of ethnic conflict (1978). In this work he introduces the concepts of 'ethnic allegiance' and 'ethnic salience'. Ethnic allegiance is the extent to which ethnic groups seek to conform to the values and norms of the group and the occasions when pressure is put on other members to do so. Cross sees this as tending to respond to pressures of economic and political interest, so that if ethnic groups perceive an increased economic or political interest together, then ethnic solidarity will tend to increase to cater for this opportunity. Ethnic allegiance is also affected by degrees of inequality, in that if an ethnic group feels relatively deprived in relation to other ethnic groups in the same society it will tend to express this disaffection in the form of ethnic solidarity and identity. For Cross

'ethnic salience' is the extent to which ethnicity is perceived as a significant variable in the operations of the society: this will be discussed further below.

In contrast to these approaches which lay stress on the economic aspects of ethnicity, there are others that stress the role of political action and interests. The importance of this element for the study of ethnicity was stressed by Cohen:

"The members of interest groups who cannot organise themselves formally will thus tend to make use, though relatively unconsciously, of whatever cultural mechanisms are available in order to articulate the organisation of their grouping. And it is here, in such situations, that political ethnicity comes into being. In my view, unless we make this distinction between formal and informal articulation of interest group organisation we shall not be able to understand or to appreciate the nature of ethnicity in either the developed or the underdeveloped countries."
(Cohen 1974:xviii)

Cohen's approach has the benefit of moving our attention from the purely formal and societal level of organisation, which is where so much of the pluralist analysis resided. This enables us to focus on the informal and diffuse aspects of ethnic identity and expression that can be reflected in general social behaviour. Thus political ethnic identity can merely be felt generally as a result of the pressure of circumstances on interests, though it may find an expression in the formal workings of the political system at the time of elections. The important thing, it would seem, is to recognise that such political identification does not have to be reflected in the constitution and functioning of formal organisations alone. The kind of situation in which this perspective is necessary has been characterised by Gelner as follows:

"If a man is not firmly set in a social niche, he is obliged to carry his social identity with him, in his whole style of conduct and expression: in other words his 'culture' becomes his identity."

(Gellner 1969:157, quoted in Hechter 1975:36)

One of the most interesting and significant recent contributions to the study of political ethnicity has been that of Hechter in his analysis of the resurgence of Celtic nationalism in Britain (1975). In this he advances an explanation via an 'internal colonialism' model which is in turn based on the distinction between 'core' and 'periphery'. He sees the internal colonialism model as being opposed to the conventional 'diffusion' model of national development which is based on the assumption that "from interaction will come commonality" (1975:7). Hechter's argument is that the evidence from the old established nation states indicates that even over several centuries this has not happened, as is exemplified by the experience of Britain in the past decades that have seen the resurgence of Celtic nationalism to an extent that has often been construed as a threat to the overall stability of the state.

He suggests that, on the other hand, this situation can be better explained by the internal colonialism model, whereby the inhabitants of the core, the "dominant cultural group that occupies territory extending from the political center of the society " (1975:18), expand their control over the country to incorporate the 'peripheral' cultural group. He produces evidence to show that this process has occurred in a number of European countries from the medieval period onwards and is still at work. In this regard Hechter's criticism of the conventional theories of national development and the power dimension of his own model very much parallels the criticisms of

conventional theories of 'modernisation' advanced by the members of the dependency school. Furthermore his model of core and periphery is very similar to the metropole and satellite model advanced by Frank, though this perspective can trace an even longer history, dating back at least to Shils's paper of 1957.

Nevertheless Hechter does offer a clarification of how the core/periphery or metropole/satellite perspective could work that is so sadly missing from the work of Frank. Furthermore, although he is mainly concerned with political action rather than economics, and certainly does not have the Marxist paradigm used by Frank, he offers an approach that combines both of these as well as a cultural dimension in the form of political ethnicity. This is connected with his breaking national development into three elements: 1) cultural integration, 2) economic integration, 3) political integration. The degree to which the separate ethnic groups constituting a society are integrated according to these criteria will determine the potential for ethnic disaffection and pressure for change. This pressure is affected by the fact that the combination of ethnicity, regional distribution and economic specialisation constitute a 'cultural division of labour' for the society. Given these characteristics the dynamics of ethnic change are seen to work as follows:

"The spatially uneven wave of modernization over state territory creates relatively advanced and less advanced groups. As a consequence of this initial fortuitous advantage, there is crystallization of the unequal distribution of resources and power between the two groups. The superordinate group, or core, seeks to stabilize and monopolize its advantages through policies aiming at the institutionalization of the existing stratification system. It attempts to regulate the allocation of social roles such that those roles commonly defined as having high prestige are reserved for its members. Conversely, individuals from the less advanced group are denied access to these roles. This stratification system, which may be

termed a cultural division of labor, contributes to the development of distinctive ethnic identification in the two groups."

(Hechter 1975:9)

The perception of disadvantage is important for the operation of this model:

"To the extent that social stratification in the periphery is based on observable cultural differences, there exists the probability that the disadvantaged group will, in time, reactively assert its own culture as equal or superior to that of the relatively advantaged core. This may help it conceive of itself as a separate 'nation' and seek independence. Hence, in this situation, acculturation and national development may be inhibited by the desires of the peripheral group for independence from a situation perceived to be exploitative."

(Hechter 1975:10)

This model is designed to elucidate the processes of national development in the older-established nations, since Hechter feels that it is here that the long-term evidence can best be seen. On the other hand, the model can apply to newly-independent countries, though as far as Hechter is concerned in these cases there are too many complicating factors. However, as far as I am concerned, these are the most interesting elements. Although the situation in Guyana does not exactly fit what Hechter has spelled out for his internal colonialism model, largely because the time-scale is not the same as that for the full model, there are nevertheless some instructive parallels. The characteristics of the core cultural group would fit very well not only the colonial situation described by R.T. Smith (1962, 1966), but also that of the creole elite who were the most successful practitioners of creole culture. Furthermore, by the criteria of integration which Hechter proposes, cultural, economic and political, Guyana does not exhibit a high degree of overall national integration. At the same time the 'cultural division of labour' which

he posits is a very accurate description of the degree of ethnic specialisation and territorial separation to be found in large parts of Guyana.

Finally the dynamics of the model fit too, in that with the ending of the formal colonial regime, and given the extent to which voting and party allegiance in Guyana is associated with race (Greene 1974), the effective political control of the country was in the hands of the political party, the People's National Congress (PNC), which had traditionally been associated with the creole section and was seen as representing their interests. In this situation the Indian section tended to feel that 'their' party, the People's Progressive Party (PPP), had been 'cheated' of power and had been undermined by external forces (Glasgow 1970; Henfrey 1972). They also felt that now they were in for a lean time under a régime that was antipathetic to their interests and which looked entrenched for the foreseeable future.

Despite the sense of euphoria that gripped the PNC as a result of gaining control of the country and steering it to independence, the potential disaffection of the Indian section must have been a serious worry to them. Apart from a desire to unify the people into the 'One Nation, One Destiny' of the national motto, there was the very vivid memory of the recent disturbances of the mid 1960s which had brought the PNC to power. The possibility of such communal strife breaking out again would have been a powerful constraint on policy, and can be seen in the efforts that were made to woo the Indian population, about which more will be said in later chapters.

Another aspect of the problem of why ethnic identities continue to exist is that of why they are important in different societies. In the analysis of Guyanese society R.T.Smith has always taken an uncompromising stance. From the beginning he has been critical of the pluralism thesis (1966) and has consistently argued that the effects of the Plantation Society were such that in the society that resulted the Guyanese lower classes have more in common than they have separating them (1962, 1966, 1970). Indeed, in a famous statement he claimed:

"The really interesting thing about British Guiana is not the extent of ethnic differences, but the degree to which a common culture exists already."
(R.T.Smith 1962:136)

Nobody else has been willing to be as emphatic as this, though this position is similar to that taken by a number of writers who have adopted the 'new ethnicity' approach.

However, whilst they are willing to stress the extent to which the forms of ethnic identity exhibited in Guyana are heavily modified by the effects of the Plantation Society, Smith believes that in addition to this one has to pay attention to the effects of the involvement of external forces, such as those of Britain as the colonial power, and of the United States as hemispheric watchdog. The reason for this perspective is that Smith sees ethnic identity in Guyana as being combination of 'primal loyalties', to which people almost instinctively turn, and a contextual identity which is used in the Guyanese political system as a means of 'debating' the relative significance, and hence the claim on resources, to be allocated to each ethnic group (1962:140).

The real problems arose when outsiders failed to understand the nature of this ethnic debate and saw threats to the colonial and regional structure where it is doubtful if any existed. Thus the concern that the original Jagan regime of 1953 was heading for Communism was enough to revoke the constitution and set back the development of Guyanese political maturity. Similarly the Robertson Commission spoke grimly of the dangers of pan-Indian nationalism and the threat of ethnic dominance within the country (Cmd 9274, 1954). This relativistic view of ethnicity is not only very similar to that of many other writers, but also pre-dates most of them. However, it does not lay as much emphasis on the economic factors as later writers, though Smith did receive an endorsement from the economist Newman (1964:52).

An approach that straddles both the economic and the political is the theory advanced by Cross (1978). Mention has already been made of his concept of 'ethnic allegiance' which is the factor affecting the degree to which people cleave to an ethnic identity. In addition he has another concept, that of 'ethnic salience', which is concerned with the extent to which ethnicity is perceived as being important for the everyday functioning of society. He argues that this concept has three dimensions: 1) the economic 2) the political 3) the spatial. He goes on to hypothesise that disruption in any one of these areas will tend to heighten ethnic salience. Thus this is a theory based on group interests and the tendency to defend these interests, though unlike Patterson (1975) he does not posit the primacy of economic interests.

This theory is also similar to the formulations of Despres (1975) in that it offers a combination of economic and spatial dimensions to ethnicity, especially in the Guyanese context. However, unlike Despres, Cross does not merely warn that the transgression of spatial and economic boundaries of ethnicity will lead to problems, he demonstrates the extent to which this has happened in Guyana. From both Census data and material from a survey he conducted in Guyana and Trinidad, he is able to show that in the post-war period the rate of entry of Indians into African areas was considerably faster in Guyana than in Trinidad and that furthermore the rate of social mobility for urban working-class Indians was the greatest for any group in either society (1978:53-55). These data parallel and add to a number of other studies such as that of Roberts (1965) and Graham & Gordon (1977) which show evidence of the same trend of increasing participation of Indians in the traditional economic preserves of Africans in Guyana, a process that has also been commented upon by R.T. Smith (1962) and Despres (1975).

THE STUDY OF GUYANESE SOCIETY

There is thus a degree of agreement between the analysts of Guyanese society about certain aspects of the latter, though there is fierce disagreement on other aspects. Nevertheless the society can be said to exhibit the following:

- 1) A high level of ethnic awareness and identification (Cross's 'ethnic salience' and 'ethnic allegiance').
- 2) A high degree of economic specialisation within the economy as a whole, with different agricultural sectors showing very little overlap.

- 3) A close identification of ethnic groups and spheres of economic activity.
- 4) A considerable degree of spatial separation of ethnic groups, especially in the rural areas.
- 5) A close identification of ethnicity with political parties and policies.

With the move from the examination of what constitutes an ethnic identity to that of which people claim and are ascribed to that identity, and in what situations, we have a much more effective set of concepts for the analysis of societies such as that of Guyana. For this approach can accomodate an ethnic identity that is flexible in content. Thus it is no longer a problem that the Indians of Guyana are not culturally the same as those of Mother India - in the context of Guyana they are 'Indian' and that is enough. They see themselves as such and are treated as such by the other members of the society.

However a more pressing problem in the context of Guyana is that with the cultural 'content' of an ethnic identity being so flexibly defined it would be possible to conceive of a situation where boundaries between groups are maintained, especially if they are broadly congruent with fixed criteria such as race, whilst in cultural 'content' they have become much more similar. This is the situation that van den Berghe has described for the Coloured population of South Africa, and in many ways also represents what has happened in Guyana. This in turn raises the question of why ethnic identities continue to exist. The question is still easier to ask than to answer, although in both cases it is deeply bound up with political issues.

On the other hand the Barthian approach does allow for the introduction of a power dimension into the analysis, a factor so markedly missing from the pluralism perspective. Now the emphasis is on the factors that affect the retention or disappearance of characteristics of ethnic identity, as well as those that influence the extent to which it is seen as a significant factor in the life of the society. Furthermore it is a type of analysis that is congruent with the concept of the Plantation Society. Thus both approaches are asking similar questions about the determinants of the cultural characteristics of the members of the society and the evaluation of these characteristics in national social processes.

I consider the work of the structural dependency school to be the most appropriate for the analysis of Guyanese society. Only that approach sets the experience of the creation of the society and its economic history into the international economic and political context that has had such a determining effect on the character of the society. For as Cross has said in his recent synoptic view of the Caribbean "...a framework for analysing the ties of dependency is the only tenable approach to understanding the patterns of change in the contemporary Caribbean" (1979:22).

At the same time it has to be recognised that the approach set forth by Frank does not adapt easily to the situation found in Guyana. The extent to which this approach is rooted in the experience of Latin America, with the central issues of the survival of feudal social forms and the role of the national bourgeoisie, makes it difficult to apply to the Guyanese situation. On the other hand the notion of the Plantation Society does not suffer from these deficiencies and seeks

to address itself specifically to the characteristics of the societies of the region, whilst at the same time preserving the advantages of the dependency approach. Furthermore, if this is also combined with a Barthian view of the dynamics of ethnicity in Guyana, then I feel we have the basis for an effective analysis of the kinds of changes experienced in Windsor Forest.

I therefore see Guyana as having the characteristics of a Plantation Society as specified by Beckford (1972) - the heavy dependence on monocrop plantation agriculture, an economy skewed to produce the support facilities for this, an infrastructure dedicated to this end and little in the way of resources, land or opportunity left over for other forms of indigenous enterprise. Furthermore it has the social characteristics of a society that has undergone that experience. As Beckford states "The predominant social characteristic of all plantation areas of the world is the existence of a class-caste system based on differences in the racial origins of plantation workers on the one hand and owners on the other. This is an inherent feature of the plantation system" (1972:67). This was certainly true of Guyana in the past and the legacy of this system can still be seen.

We thus have a case of several ethnic groups within the society as a result of the various forms of 'unfree labour' recruited over time (Rex 1973), though with two dominant ones, the Africans and the Indians, who from the earliest times of their settlement were encouraged to take an antagonistic attitude to each other (Bartels 1977). Furthermore they had started to evolve into what Despres (1969) has called, after Barth, 'ecological niches'. Thus the

Indians moved into the places on the sugar plantations vacated by the ex-slaves and have remained an overwhelmingly rural group ever since. On the other hand the African population has tended to concentrate in the more urban areas and to engage in urban work even when they live in the rural areas.

According to Despres (1975) this ecological adaptation served to remove the full force of ethnic competition by ensuring that both ethnic sections were able to maintain a degree of isolated distance and to preserve an economic base for the continuation of their separate identities. To the extent that there was little or no encroachment of one ethnic section into the preserve of the other things were reasonably peaceful, but if the transgression of boundaries did take place then ethnic conflict of some kind was likely. Nevertheless the pattern of ethnic constituencies or 'ecological niches' advanced by Despres needs to be integrated at the national level, and it is at this level that the major problems are found, for as Beckford states,

"However, in spite of these basic differences in cultural traditions among the groups, they manage somehow to live together. And this welding process can be attributed to the plantation system. In every instance, however, the weld is continuously under pressure because of the underlying inherent social and cultural differences"

(Beckford 1972:60).

I feel it is also important to see ethnicity in this context having the character that Patterson has emphasised:

"Ethnicity can only be understood in terms of a dynamic and contextual view of group allegiances;...what is critical about an ethnic group is not the particular set of symbolic objects which distinguishes it, but the social uses of these objects;...ethnic loyalties reflect, and are maintained by, the underlying socioeconomic interests of group members."

(Patterson 1975:305)

Given this orientation I see the functioning of ethnicity in Guyana as determined by the following factors:

1) The cultural characteristics of the Guyanese population has been heavily modified by the effects of the Plantation Society. As was mentioned above this was a rigid and thorough process of accommodating the immigrant groups to the needs of large-scale plantation agriculture and the convenience of the expatriate managerial staff. This primarily involved the suppression or removal of social characteristics, such as language, caste and dietary habits, that were incompatible with the smooth running of the estates. In addition it also involved the inculcation of values and aspirations that were derived from the European culture of the dominant colonial and economic group. This found its main expression in 'creole culture' and 'creole society', but all groups in the society were affected by it in some way. Thus over the past century this process has been at work and in the analysis of Guyanese society it is important to determine the extent to which the process of 'creolisation' is continuing.

2) This process was greatly assisted by the activities of the colonial and commercial administrations. They thought and worked in terms of discrete ethnic and racial identities, to which moral values were attached. These conceptual frameworks in turn formed the basis of much of the conventional characterisation of ethnic groups that feature in daily life in Guyana. It can be argued that the creation of distinct ethnic identities was inherent in the colonial situation, as well as being in the interests of the administering elite:

"It was an integral part of the process of creolization to stress the differences between groups identified as 'racial' groups."
(R.T.Smith 1966:51)

3) This colonial system, with its rigid social distinctions and ethnic compartments, spawned a ramified structure of ethnic interest groups and representations. As will be discussed more fully in Chapter 2 the Colonial Office and the colonial officials felt a sense of paternal responsibility for the different sections of the population, especially what were felt to be those who were capable of developing 'a stake in the country' by becoming peasant farmers, especially the Indians. Similarly there was the special bureaucracy established to cater for the case of the Indians, the Immigration Agent General, and as we have seen the Indians soon learned how to lobby and petition these agencies, and what arguments to use to gain access to the resources that the Government had to offer. Thus the colonial government, as ultimate controller of the country's resources, became the arbiter of demands that were passed up through a system of ethnic agencies and organisations and, as Cross has pointed out, this situation of ethnic distinctiveness did not disappear with the growth of nationalism and the approach of independence (1978).

It is in this situation that one gets the form of specialised ethnic institutions so emphasised by the pluralists, especially Despres (1967). In one sense this form of analysis has utility, in that it is able to highlight the operation of the process of 'capturing' formal organisations for specific ethnic groups. This can have great significance at the national level, where the final representation to the ultimate arbitrating body takes place. It is also to this end that the kind of 'debate' about ethnic worth and significance, described by Smith (1962:140), was carried out as part of the national process of ethnic competition for resources within the confines of the colonial system. One of the important areas of

investigation now is concerned with the extent to which this process still continues and to what extent it has been superceded by something else.

4) One of the main problems with the institutional focus of the pluralist approach is that it cannot deal with the activities of actors in observable social action, as was revealed by Despres's attempts to do so for the village communities he studied (1967). The problem therefore remains of how we should evaluate the cultural dimension associated with ethnicity at the local level and at that of observed social action. Here the differences in interpretation vary between that of Klass (1961) on the one hand, who sees Indians as essentially operating a cultural system very much based on that of 'Mother India', to that of R.T. Smith, who emphasises the homogeneity of Guyanese culture.

The solution would seem to be to adopt an approach which incorporates both the institutional framework determined and sanctioned by the overall social structure, and the criteria by which individual actors operate in their everyday lives. Such an approach would entail accepting for a start:

"...that human beings have a variety of group allegiances; that these allegiances may coincide or overlap or conflict with each other; and that human beings seek to maximise their economic and social status and minimise their survival risks in the societies in which they live."

(Patterson 1975:305)

This approach is very like that of Shils (1968), where he talks of the 'bundles of deference-entitlements' that individuals are able to collect from different institutional areas of their social life. This is essentially an individualist sociology which sees larger societal

categories such as classes and status groups emerging as a result of banding as sections of the population seek to make their bundles of deference-entitlements compatible. This approach offers many advantages for the study of multi-ethnic societies, but the perspective of total individualism weakens this considerably, in view of the strong evidence of cultural imposition.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing discussion has attempted to delineate some of the difficulties encountered in the analysis of multi-ethnic societies, as well as indicating the extent to which the various theoretical approaches are able to contribute to such an analysis. No one approach has been found totally satisfactory, though several do offer useful perspectives on the complexity of problems encountered in societies such as that of Guyana.

I have therefore attempted to produce an analysis which combines on the one hand the overall social framework derived from the institutional history of the society and on the other a focus on the activities of actors within that framework. Thus as a result of the legacy of the Plantation Society the Guyanese population has a number of social categories which correspond to ethnic groups, and a number of value judgements that they attach to these.

"Creolization did involve societal integration and did involve a fundamental change in the culture and social structure of constituent ethnic groups, but it did not lead to the creation of a unified society. On the contrary it was basic to the creole colonial society to maintain an image of a divided society."

(R.T.Smith 1966:51).

On the other hand they also have a set of values which relate to individual goals and aspirations and which are appropriate for the awarding of deference to those who have achieved these goals. This is the familiar area of the evaluation of the relative significance of race and class that has so occupied the analysis of multi-racial societies, especially the Deep South of the USA (Dollard 1949; Banton 1967). It is also a problem for the analysis of societies such as Guyana where the combination of ethnic values and practices can be combined with the operation of values and activities derived from the wider society.

One of the things to be investigated is the extent to which a process of increasing incorporation into the activities and values of 'creole' society and culture is taking place among the Indians of Guyana. As has been mentioned, R.T. Smith believes that the basic combination has been achieved, whilst others have concluded that the current economic and political pressures are tending to encourage a greater penetration of 'creole culture' into the Indian section of the population (Newman 1964:52; Singh 1972:21).

Given the above perspective, the thesis will attempt to answer the following questions:

1) Economic change in Windsor Forest.

At the time of his study in 1956 R.T.Smith made the following prognostication:

"For the past few years prosperity has been increasing for Windsor Forest rice farmers. Rising prices for rice, coupled with an increase in the area under cultivation, particularly on private estates lower down the coast, has enabled incomes to keep up with, and slightly overtake, a rising cost-of-living and a rapidly increasing population. The outlook for the future is not so encouraging. It does not appear that the upward trend in prices is likely to continue at its past rate, and there is no indication of a rapid expansion, either in the area of land under cultivation or in any other sector of the economy. Even if it were possible to bring about significant increases in yields per acre, it is clear that a large proportion of the next generation of adults will either have to turn to some crop which gives a higher return from a smaller area of land, or leave the district, or endure a sharp drop in the present standard of living. From the figures given in this paper one can see that such a drop must result in real hardship."

(R.T.Smith 1957, p. 519)

Despite the fact that most of the factors mentioned by Smith continued to operate during the succeeding years, the rather gloomy prediction was not borne out. What factors intervened to prevent this?

2) The context of decision making.

Long has pointed out that in order to understand the processes of economic and technical innovation and change adequately, it is necessary to adopt both a micro and a macro perspective.

"One weakness of the anthropological approach to entrepreneurship, however, is its failure to link the detailed study of micro-processes to a consideration of macro-structures. This is most noticeable in the tendency in some analyses to accord the individual too much independence of action and manipulative power, and concomitantly to give insufficient attention to the ways in which regional or national politico-economic structures determine the types and scales of entrepreneurship possible."
(Long 1977,142)

This means not only examining the process of decision making at the local level, but also seeing this in the context of national and international structures that have a determining effect on the local-level processes. Through the recent history of technical innovation in the rice industry in Windsor Forest I intend to investigate whether an approach such as that suggested by Long and incorporating a series of encapsulating structures offers worthwhile benefits for the analysis of decision making in the context of change and innovation.

3) Political ethnicity.

Reference has been made above to the 'internal colonialism' model of Hechter (1975). If this is applied to Guyana as suggested above, the model would predict that the recent political experience of the Indian ethnic section would result in a sense of disaffection, increased ethnic assertion and on the other hand a political response on the part of the 'core' elite to blunt the potential damage of these pressures. I intend to examine the extent to which evidence for this prediction can be found in the political activities which took place in Windsor Forest.

4) Modernisation.

The rice industry in Guyana in general, and in Windsor Forest in particular, has experienced a good deal of technical innovation in the recent past. In addition increasing numbers of village residents are employed in urban and technical occupations. Such a trend is frequently interpreted as a process of 'modernisation'. I intend to examine the extent to which such a perspective is useful in the analysis of the kinds of changes experienced in Windsor Forest.

5) Ethnicity.

Given the high degree of association between economic activity, spatial location and ethnicity in Guyana, I intend to see if the economic changes associated with innovation in the rice industry have any implications for the national ethnic system of the country.

With the specification of the theoretical approach that I propose to use and the questions I intend to consider, the time has come for the presentation and analysis of the research data.

This will begin in Chapter 2, which examines the history of Windsor Forest and considers, in particular, the events and thinking behind the formation of the Land Settlement Scheme, as well as those behind the fight for its survival. Chapter 3 is concerned with the system of rice production that grew up in the years following the establishment of the Scheme and which represents the system that has been in operation for most of the time that the village has been producing rice, still being in use at the time of Smith's study. It thus

represents the system that was superceded by the mechanised cultivation that I found in 1972. These two historical Chapters are essentially concerned with delineating the structural factors that provided the context in which the later changes and innovations are to be seen.

Chapter 4 presents contemporary data on Windsor Forest as it was in 1972 and examines some of the changes that have occurred since Smith's 1950 study. In particular the changing ethnic composition of the village is discussed, as well as the national political events that produced this, and which have also had an effect on Indian political ethnicity. Chapter 5 is concerned with the changes that have taken place in agriculture, especially the mechanisation of rice production, and discusses the way in which these came about and tries to evaluate some of the consequences of these changes. The discussion in this Chapter therefore has relevance to all of the main research questions.

Chapter 6 deals with the growth of urban employment, which arose as a direct result of the changes in the rice industry. This represents a considerable change in 'traditional' Indian practices and effects almost every household in the village, as well as having implications in a wider context. Chapter 7 discusses the changed political context in which the residents of the village now operate. With the fierce upheavals of the 1960s, the independence of the country and the entrenchment of one party in power, the political forces on the village have altered considerably. In addition the economic changes in rice and employment also have major political implications and these were very much to the fore in the political events which occurred in the village during fieldwork. The final Chapter examines

the foregoing evidence and re-considers the research questions in the light of this.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF WINDSOR FOREST

- Introduction
- General History of Guyana
- Agriculture on the Guyanese Coastal Plain
- Indenture
- The Movement off the Plantations
- Windsor Forest
- The Establishment of a Land Settlement Scheme
- The Pressure for Sale
- The Committees of Enquiry
- The Working of the Leasehold System
- The West Demerara Estates and Colonial Politics
- Summary and Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

Reference was made in the preceding Chapter to the extent to which the ethnic groups in Guyana are characterised by spatial and economic specialisation. Windsor Forest represents part of the Indian variant of this specialisation, and the current Chapter will attempt to demonstrate how this situation came about.

In the same Chapter reference was also made to the concept of an 'ecological niche', and I consider that in many ways Windsor Forest can be seen as an example of this in the context of the Guyanese rice industry. This is because the village, along with the other estates that came to form the West Demerara Government Estates, offered very distinct advantages to the small farmers who settled on them. They were able to obtain lengthy leases from Government at very reasonable rates which had the additional, and inestimable, virtue of being fixed for the duration of the lease. In return for these rates the settlers obtained an excellent drainage and irrigation system maintained by Government. Thus they enjoyed the kind of production facilities normally only available to sugar estates.

However, these unusual facilities did not become available easily and there was a good deal of opposition to such 'lavish' Government support, as we shall see. Furthermore, the battle to establish the Land Settlement Scheme and its facilities also laid the basis of a relationship with Government that has had a decisive effect on the community in the intervening years. Therefore, this Chapter sets out the way in which the Land Settlement Scheme came about and examines the emergence of some of its significant structural characteristics.

GENERAL HISTORY OF GUYANA

"Although Guyana is more than 200 miles from the Caribbean, it can be viewed as a Caribbean 'sugar island' perched on the northeast shoulder of South America but separated from the 'mainland' by swamps, a few miles inland."

(Area Handbook for Guyana, p.7)

The Guianas, consisting of what later became British Guiana, French Guiana and Dutch Guiana, were first discovered by Europeans when Columbus sailed along the coast in 1498.

The part of the coast that later became British Guiana (hereafter referred to by its contemporary name of Guyana) seems to have received little attention for some time. It was reputedly the site of Raleigh's fabulous city of El Dorado, and was considered as a potential site for the Pilgrim Fathers, who decided to settle further north instead (R.T. Smith 1962:13. See also, Clementi 1937, Parry & Sherlock 1971, Daly 1975, Adamson 1972). It was in fact the Dutch who first settled in the area in 1621 with a settlement at Fort Kijkoveral a considerable distance up the broad Essequibo river at the confluence of its tributaries the Cuyuni and Mazaruni. Over the succeeding years the settlements spread down the river banks to utilise the fertile soil and concentrated on cotton and coffee growing. They also traded in natural tropical products with the indigenous Amerindian population.

In 1742 the Commandeur of the West India Company's settlement in Guyana was Storm van 's Gravesande, one of the most influential people in the early history of Guyana, who, until his retirement in 1772, oversaw the huge growth in the agricultural and trading activities of the Guyanese settlements. In 1746 the Demerara region was opened for

settlement and there followed a large influx of British settlers, many from Barbados where it was felt the soil was becoming over-worked. The expansion of the coastal settlements continued at such a pace that by 1750 it required its own Commandeur, and by 1760 Storm reported that the British were in the majority in Demerara (R.T.Smith 1962:16).

From the earliest times there had also been a separate settlement in Berbice which had its own administration. With the move to the coastlands this too grew and by the end of the 18th Century the main activities of the country were concentrated on the coastlands.

In 1781, during the American War of Independence, Britain was also involved in hostilities with Holland and the colony of Guyana was formally captured by the British navy. However it was not securely held and was re-captured by the French as allies of the Dutch in 1782. The French commander, Comte de Kersaint, decided to move the administration of the colony to the mouth of the Demerara river and named the settlement Longchamps. In 1784 the colony was returned to Dutch control and they continued to use the new capital site, renaming it Stabroek. However all was not well in the colony and there was a good deal of internal arguing and disagreement with the Company over the taxation and control of trade it exercised. A Commission was established by the Dutch government which recommended a 'Concept Plan of Redress', which incorporated a set of constitutional provisions. This formed the basis of the colony's government for more than a century.

The Plan proposed a central body called the Court of Policy, consisting of the main officials of the colony plus two colonists from

each of the administrative districts of Demerara and Essequibo. In addition there was a Court of Justice for each district consisting of six colonists and two officials. The Commission's report on the activities of the original Company was so critical that its charter was allowed to lapse in 1792 and it was replaced by the new United Colony of Demerara and Essequibo, with Berbice still a separate settlement.

The Plan was put into practice in 1789 and soon after this the Netherlands became involved in the wars of the French Revolution, with the Prince of Holland fleeing to England and Holland becoming the Batavian Republic. In Guyana there was confusion, with slave revolts and the Governor leaving the colony.

In 1796 the British invaded the colony and took formal control, at which point the settlers sought to have it established that the arrangements of the Combined Council were part of the 'ancient laws and usages' of the Colony which were to be kept in operation under the terms of the capitulation. They failed in this, but in order to obtain their support the British agreed to the establishment of six Financial Representatives to be elected by all settlers owning 25 slaves or more. These Financial Representatives were to sit with the Court of Policy and had the right to vote on matters connected with the raising of revenue by taxation. When the Financial Representatives were present the body became the Combined Court. This form (of the Court of Policy and the Combined Court with the Financial Representatives) became the basis of the colony's constitutional structure for more than a century. This was a very significant victory for the interests of the planters, for as Smith says:

"The Financial Representatives thus acquired virtual control over the imposition of taxes but had neither power over, nor responsibility for, their expenditure."

(R.T. Smith 1962:25)

As we shall see the role of the Financial Representatives was very much the same in the early years of this century and the structural cleavage between powers over the raising of taxes and their disbursement was as wide and as problematic as it had ever been.

In 1803 the colony was temporarily returned to the Dutch by the Treaty of Amiens, but for less than a year. With the renewed outbreak of hostilities the colony was again taken by the British, and remained under their control from then on. The legal and administrative unification of Demerara and Essequibo was effected in 1812, and in 1831 the whole colony was unified, with the inclusion of Berbice. Furthermore, the new colony of British Guiana was henceforth to be administered from Georgetown, the city that had grown up round the original Dutch settlement of Stabroek at the mouth of the Demerara River.

AGRICULTURE ON THE GUYANESE COASTAL PLAIN

The coastal plain of the Guianas drains the watershed of the Orinoco/ Amazon divide and the amounts of water flowing north to the sea are very large. Thus the name 'Guiana', a reputedly Amerindian name meaning 'land of waters' is very appropriate (R.T. Smith 1962:4). The country is drained by four huge rivers; the Essequibo, which is 600 miles long, drains half of the country and has an estuary 14 miles wide (Area Handbook for Guyana p. 12), the Demerara, the Berbice and the Corentyne, which forms the border with Surinam. Whilst wide and large these rivers are relatively sluggish since the gradient is only

one foot per mile for the most part. Also navigation is restricted by rapids not very far inland and by sandbars at their mouths. This prevents ships entering either the Demerara River or the port of Georgetown when fully laden.

The climate of Guyana is equatorial since the coastlands are only some 7-9 degrees from the equator. However the coast is cooled by continual sea breezes which are much appreciated by the population, so that houses are frequently sited to take maximum advantage of them. The mean temperature in Georgetown is 80 degrees Fahrenheit, with a daily range of 15 degrees (ibid:14). The rainfall for the coastlands increases as one moves from east to west, with the east having some 80 inches per year and the far west over 110 inches. Georgetown has an average of 90 inches per year (ibid). The rain falls in two main seasons; the long rainy season from mid-April to mid-August and a small one from mid-November to mid-February, with rain falling for 200 days of the year on average. However there can be considerable variation in the frequency and duration of the rains, so that there are some years which experience floods and others that have droughts. This causes considerable problems for farmers and a popular saying is that "Guyana has only two seasons, wet and dry, and either can happen at any time".

The soil of the coastland is mainly composed of 'frontland clay' resulting from the accretion of alluvial deposits from the rivers of the country, with the addition of the silt of the Amazon swept out to sea and returned to the Guianas by tidal action. This soil is of high fertility and is approximately one foot thick on the coastlands. The fertile coastal plain is some 120 miles long and 3-5 miles deep,

whilst the 150 or so miles to the west are far less fertile and are not settled. This land composes some 2.5 million acres, of which approximately 2 million would be suitable for agriculture. Currently less than half of this amount is under cultivation (ibid:10).

When the country was first settled, as we have seen, the fertile river banks offered the best sites for the coastlands, were covered with dense mangrove swamps and were very low lying. Thus the settlement of the coastlands did not take place until more than fifty years after the first settlements were formed; the expense and organisational problems were too intimidating. However by the middle of the eighteenth century the movement to the coast had started and the land was effectively drained. This was done under Dutch supervision and control, though largely for the benefit of the increasing numbers of British settlers.

The problems encountered were generally overcome, although at great cost and with several severe and unavoidable limitations. The most serious problem is that the drained lands are frequently below sea level, especially at high tide, and so agriculture can only continue if the sea defences are fully maintained. As we shall see this was not always done, with serious consequences in the case of Windsor Forest.

On the other hand the coastlands face innundation from the opposite direction too, since they are backed by swampy lands which collect between the white sand areas to be found behind the alluvial silt. These swamps flood in the rainy season and so the coastal cultivation has to be protected from this by 'back dams'. Thus the lands to be

planted have to be laid out between the sea wall and the back dam several miles inland. However these back dams can also serve a useful purpose as containers of the flood waters into conservancies which allow the water to be released in a regulated way for irrigation. Several large schemes have been implemented in the past thirty years to improve this system and there are others planned. Thus the problem of irrigation, the converse of drainage, is also present, and also requires a complex solution since the conservancies serve a large area to which supplies have to be regulated.

Thus the system originally devised by the Dutch in the eighteenth century formed the basis for cultivation on the coastlands, and continues to do so today. The original form of the plantations was for a frontage of 400 yards (100 Rhynland rods) and land allocated to a 'first depth' of 3,000 yards (750 rods), giving a total area of some 250 acres which could be added to by a 'second depth' from the Crown when the first was fully used. Second depth land was less fertile since it frequently contained 'pegasse' or peaty soil and possibly sand reefs. Down the centre of the estate flowed the main irrigation trench flanked by the 'middle walk' or main access road. The water flowed to the fields on either side and through them to the drainage or 'sideline' trenches on the flanks of the plantation. These then drained into a main trench near the sea wall and eventually out through a sluice or 'koker' which had to be opened at low tide.

The expense and administrative complexity of keeping such a system functioning efficiently was considerable, and this has always militated against small scale cultivation. This was a problem for the owners of small estates, for the freed slaves seeking to become peasant cultivators and for the the peasant cultivators of today.

INDENTURE

With the ending of slavery the size of the Guyanese coastland in relation to its population became a liability for the sugar planters as the freed slaves frequently strove to start independent communities on disused sugar estates away from those currently worked. This left the planters with a problem over the supply of labour - which had always been a major inhibitor of economic growth, even in comparison with the very expensive civil engineering works involved in Guyanese cultivation. Attempts were made to encourage labour to migrate from other West Indian islands, and though this met with some success, it did not adequately replace the departed labour, let alone stem the decline that always threatened as a result of the very high death rate in the colony.

Another source that was tried was the indenture of labour from Madeira, and although substantial numbers of labourers were brought into Guyana from this source the experience was not totally satisfactory since it was frequently claimed that they lacked the stamina required for sustained work in the cane fields. Furthermore they tended to choose the earliest opportunity to leave the plantation and establish businesses, usually small shops. A similar experience occurred with the importation of Chinese labourers, who followed the same path as the Portuguese into shopkeeping in the first instance (Adamson 1972; R.T. Smith 1962).

The only satisfactory solution was found to be the importation of indentured labour from India. One of the main instigators of the importation of the first shipment of coolies in 1836 was a Mr. Gladstone, father of W.E. Gladstone, and at that time owner of

Plantation Vreed en Hoop, across the river from Georgetown. The experiment was a success and although there were some breaks the immigration of East Indians into Guyana was almost continuous from 1836 until 1917, when the process was ended by the opposition of nationalist politicians in India. Attempts by planters to have the supply resumed in the 1920s were to no avail (Tinker 1974; Nath 1970).

Altogether some 340,000 East Indians were imported into Guyana between 1836 and 1917 (Nath 1970 Table 1). Initially they were indentured for a period of five years and then released from their liability and thus eligible for return to India. However the Combined Court empowered planters to induce labourers to sign on for a further period of five years of indenture on payment of a lump sum. This became very common, though not always approved of, and the majority of immigrants remained in the country.

In view of the problems that the planters had experienced in recruiting and maintaining a satisfactory labour force it is not surprising that they should exert all their influence via the Combined Court and the Court of Policy to prevent this valuable resource being lost from the plantations. Thus there was little encouragement of settlement away from the main estate areas and a generally restrictive policy regarding the release of Crown Lands throughout the nineteenth century. This meant that lands could only be bought or leased in large blocks in the form of whole estates on the coast or 100 acre blocks in the case of Crown Lands in the interior.

THE MOVEMENT OFF THE PLANTATIONS

However East Indians wished to obtain land and as more and more came out of indenture there was a growing pressure for easier access to small amounts of land for sale or lease. From the 1860s there were demands for land grants to be made in lieu of return passages to India, and this did have an attraction for planters who did not wish to lose seasonal labourers. The first move to accomodate this demand was the settlement at Nooten Zuill on the East Coast Demerara in 1871, but it was not a great success since the land was not in good condition. In 1873 a second settlement was started at Huist Dieran, but that too failed because of its distance from sugar estates that could have provided employment whilst it became established (Nath chap X).

In 1894 a firm decision was made to commute return passages into land for those who wished and to this end settlements were established at Whim, Bush Lot, Helena and Maria's Pleasure. Although they had mixed fortunes, partly as a result of being established at a time of severe and prolonged drought which wiped out several of them, they eventually became conventionally administered villages (ibid).

The main activity of these settlers, particularly in the Corentyne, was cattle grazing, although they did also cultivate subsistence and cash crops. In part they emulated the original Afro-Guyanese settlers by cultivating 'ground provisions', such as yams, edoes and other root crops; but they also cultivated their own distinctive crop: rice. Rice had been cultivated in Guyana since the eighteenth century by slaves and freed Afro-Guyanese (Smith 1957:502). However the real expansion of rice growing came as a result of the activities of the

East Indians. For in addition to allowing them to squat on unused land planters also allowed them to cultivate rice on estate lands during the period of the sugar slump. The harvest time for rice coincided with the crop time for sugar, which had in the past led to the cultivation of rice being discouraged by planters. Now, with the severity of the slump making it difficult to maintain labourers, the concession to grow rice was now seen as a useful inducement to encourage them to stay on the estates (Mandle 1973 chap 4).

In 1894 the Guiana Rice Co was established in Georgetown and a proper rice mill was opened. Throughout the last decade of the nineteenth century the rice industry continued to grow from these small beginnings and by 1898 it was estimated that there were some 6,500 acres under cultivation. Thus the industry had become an established feature of the agricultural pattern.

WINDSOR FOREST

At this time Windsor Forest and La Jalousie, on the West Coast of Demerara, were owned by the New Colonial Company, one of the largest sugar companies in the country. This enterprise was one of the leaders of the process of estate consolidation that took place at the end of the nineteenth century and represented one form of attack on the problems of the depression, namely the acquisition of more estates. The other approach was that taken by Booker Brothers, who concentrated on sugar transport and trading. It was the Booker formula that proved more successful and the New Colonial Company collapsed (Adamson 1972). However the British Guiana Directory for 1902 shows the N.C.C. owning seven estates, including Albion estate in Berbice, today one of the largest in the country. Windsor Forest was

at that time equipped with the relatively modern vacuum pan boiler system and was the only grinding estate on that part of the coast (La Jalousie like many other original estates having been used solely for cultivation). It also had a senior staff of the Manager, Mr. H.C. Menzies (after whom Menzies Street in the village is named), a chemist Mr. F.I. Seard and an engineer Mr. G.A. Stewart.

However it appears that cultivation was not going well since large parts of the western frontland section were planted in rice, nor had the estates been well maintained, as the Commissioner of Lands and Mines reported when he visited the estates on 17th December 1910.

"The estates are in an absolutely abandoned condition, no money having been spent on drainage or water supply for some years past, and all the dams are overgrown and cut up by cattle."

(Minute by Commissioner of Lands & Mines on the subject of Plns. Windsor Forest and La Jalousie, Combined Court 1911, C O 114/137)

In view of the parlous state into which the estates had fallen during the lean years of the depression it is not surprising that when the sea wall was breached in 1908 the New Colonial Company simply preferred to abandon the estates rather than contemplate the expense of repairing and restoring them. The breach of the sea wall and consequent flooding represented a severe threat not only to these estates but also to all others in the area, since apart from destroying standing crops, the sea water residues increased the salinity of the soil and so reduced its fertility. Because the whole coastland was so low-lying a breach of the sea wall threatened a large area and was one of the most feared disasters.

With the unwillingness of the New Colonial Company to repair the breach the Government invoked its powers under Ordinance No.2 of 1883 and arranged for the necessary work to be carried out and the cost transferred to the Company in the form of a lien on the estate (Government Secretary, Court of Policy 10th May 1909, CO 114/127). The work commenced on 30th March 1909 and was estimated to cost \$43,000.

At that time only \$732.31 had been realised by the sale of movable property from the estate (Government Secretary, Combined Court 28th September 1909, CO 114/129). Not surprisingly there was a good deal of concern expressed by the elected members of the Combined Court over the financial burden they felt was being placed on the Colony. This was far from being the last time that this issue was to be raised in the legislature.

Indeed this was the beginning of what was to prove a protracted and at times bitter wrangle over the extent to which these Government Estates (Windsor Forest, La Jalousie & Hague) were being burdensome to the taxpayers of the Colony. The sea defences themselves constituted a very large part of this cost, with the original estimate of \$43,000 in 1909 having risen to \$60,000 in 1911, when the Governor sought urgent permission to raise a loan for this amount and a further \$15,000 for similar work elsewhere in the area (Hodgson to Harcourt 3rd January 1911, File 3080, CO 111/576). The Colonial Office was generally anxious not to embark on any expensive new developments, but the insistent need for adequate sea defences continually drove them to more and more expenditure in this area. Thus the response to this plea was the same as on so many other occasions:

"We have no option. Sea defence is a matter which must be carried out."

(Hodgson to Harcourt, 14th March 1911,
File 10904, CO 111/576)

By now the Government Estates included Hague, another abandoned estate some three miles to the west of the two original ones. However this fact in itself cannot account for the escalation of Government expenditure in this area. For in 1912 we have the Combined Court approving a motion for the raising of a loan of \$126,176 for the sea defences of the three estates (Minutes of the Combined Court 27th February 1912, CO 114/141). By the end of 1916 the total expenditure for sea defences for the three estates was \$234,006.34 (Memorandum by the Commissioner of Lands & Mines concerning the Pins. Windsor Forest, La Jalousie and Hague, Clementi to Long, 30th December 1916, CO 111/608). In addition the internal drainage system had cost a further \$52,824.05, making a total expenditure of \$286,830.64 (ibid).

These were very considerable amounts of money and were beyond the resources of the New Colonial Company, which therefore abandoned all further interest in the estates. In due course the estates were put up for execution sale in an attempt to recoup the Government's expenditure. However there were no offers and the Government was forced to purchase them themselves. Windsor Forest was bought for \$1,250 in November 1910, whereas La Jalousie had sold for a mere \$30 in September of the same year (Deeds Registry records).

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEME

Now that the estates were officially owned by the Government the question arose as to what was to be done with them, especially in view of the substantial debts that had been incurred in making them secure. They were visited by the Commissioner of Lands & Mines in January 1911 and he found them in a sad state, with the minimum of expenditure having been undertaken by the previous owners. Since the abandonment of the estates the frontlands (now the housing areas) were under rice, but the rest was given over to cattle grazing (Report of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines 1910/11, at para. 77, CO 114/135).

The Minute to the Combined Court that resulted from this visit (Combined Court No. 500 1911, CO 114/137) recommended that the lands be administered by the Government for a period of 4 or 5 years and then the possibility of selling the lots be considered. The Minute also suggests that the land could be rented for rice at \$6 per acre and other crop land at \$9 per acre per year, giving an estimated income of \$10,300 against an expenditure of \$4,300. This was sufficient to ensure that the proposal was adopted by the Combined Court on 1st March 1911, and when later forwarded to the Colonial Office it also formed a satisfactory justification for sanctioning the borrowing of the \$75,000 for sea defences for the area previously requested (File 10904, CO 111/576).

However, this solution was not what the Commissioner for Lands & Mines originally had in mind, for in a later debate in the Combined Court he stated:

"The Government hoped that the sugar industry would revive and that La Jalousie, Windsor Forest and Hague would be acquired by the contiguous sugar estates and converted into a sugar estate."

(Debates of the Combined Court 17th November 1916)

This proved not to be possible, and so the land was let for rice cultivation, although the Commissioner later claimed:

"I objected to this course for a long time because it seemed to me to be a very bad thing to reduce the propoerties into rice estates. Land after put in rice cultivation is practically useless."

(ibid)

This is hardly the voice of a rice industry lobbyist, and so the fact that the estates did finally go into rice cultivation was the outcome of considerable pressure from potential settlers against an entrenched official attitude in favour of the sugar interests. As the Commissioner stated later:

"...the East Indians were clamouring for such holdings for this purpose."

(Combined Court Debates, 17th November 1916)

There was also encouragement from other official sources, such as the Immigration Agent General:

"In view of the East Indian's fondness for posessing and cultivating his own land and of his industrious habits it is a pity that he should experience any checks on investing his savings with safety in the Colony in accordance with this worthy and useful natural tendency."

(Report of the Immigration Agent General 1908/9, at para. 34, CO 114/125)

Even the Colonial Office was disposed towards the idea, for one of the official's comments to the Colonial Secretary in response to the request for loan sanction in connection with sea defences was:

"The estates to be protected have fallen into the hands of the Government which becomes responsible for the sea defence works, unless it is decided to abandon them. This latter is probably undesirable as similar estates are being disposed of by the Government for land settlement and the same course may be found practicable here."

(File 3080, CO 111/576)

It is thus perhaps not surprising that the proposals in the Commissioner of Lands & Mines' Minute of 1911 should have found such ready acceptance in London.

Despite the key decision having been made to rent out the land to peasant farmers the problems were by no means finally resolved. For although land settlement schemes for East Indians might have been appealing to London they nevertheless had a very chequered history in terms of implementation in Guyana. In this context the experience of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines was very influential. Perhaps not surprisingly he had strong views on the subject:

"The people do not want to buy land. A glance at the villages throughout the Colony will show that barely one third of the land owned by the villagers is under cultivation. Why then should the people hunger for more land which simply adds to their liabilities for rates and taxes?

(Minute of Commissioner of Lands & Mines, Combined Court No. 600, 1911, CO 114/137)

This question of liability for rates and taxes is crucial in the matter of land holdings in rural Guyana and had dogged previous settlement schemes. As the Commissioner said at a later date:

"If we sell out the estates in lots they eventually have to come under the Local Government Board. It is impossible for the people to maintain the estates themselves, and it will simply be transferring control of the estates from the Department of Lands & Mines to the Local Government Board.... We dealt some years ago with Clonbrook and sold it out in small lots at the rate of \$20 a piece. Maintenance charges on that estate for the first three or four years amounted to

more than the rent the people had been paying and there was an enormous amount of friction and ill feeling. The East Indians who had purchased could not understand why they should have to pay this amount plus what they had purchased the land for. They purchased the land under the blissful idea that they would have the land and control themselves without further change."

(Combined Court Debate 17th November 1916)

In view of this experience it is not surprising that in his Minute of 1911 the Commissioner specifically suggested that the Clonbrook procedure should not be followed (Combined Court No. 600 of 1911, at para. 8, CO 114/137)

Although the Colony's officials were not happy with the previous attempts at land settlement, the solution which was tried on the West Demerara Estates appears to have been prompted from another source. The Commissioner of Lands and Mines again recalls his thinking at the time as follows:

"Another idea which influenced the Government in putting the estates up for lease was a suggestion of one of the Commissioners who came from India to inquire into the immigration system. Mr. McNeid*, in speaking to me about the working of the Local Government Board, said the East Indians did not like the system because they were never certain of the assessments being the same every year, and that it created a great deal of dissatisfaction in their minds. They preferred to have a stated amount of assessment."

(Combined Court Debate 17 November 1916)

* This presumably refers to Mr. McNeill of the McNeill and Chiman Lal Commission which visited Guyana in 1913 and reported in 1915.

This form of Government thinking received further support from the Acting Colonial Secretary during the same debate:

"When the Commissioners from India came here one of the things that attracted their attention was the system by which the small man can come and buy his land. They very clearly and strongly pointed out that it had come to their notice that a certain section of the people did not like that system. These people were not accustomed to it in their own country. They paid a certain sum down for their land and then found themselves under the administration of the Local Government Board, facing every year with a varying assessment for maintainance. They could not understand it."

(Combined Court Debate 17th November 1916)

Turning to the case of the West Demerara Estates the Acting Colonial Secretary then continued:

"When these lands came into the hands of the Government it could not sell them out as a whole...Then came the recommendations of the Commissioner and it seemed a peculiarly suitable opportunity to try the experiment. The lands are leased at an inclusive charge of a reasonable figure so that when a man paid his rent he paid everything and had no concern with water or sea defence. It is guaranteed to him that the rent will be such and such for a certain number of years, therefore the man knows exactly where he is."

(ibid)

This image of the concerned colonial administrator seeking for a reasonable solution and seizing the "peculiarly suitable opportunity to try the experiment" recommended by the Commissioners is appealing; but unfortunately it is far from correct. For the Commissioners did not come to Guyana until 1913, by which time the estates had been under effective Government control for some four years. This was also more than two years after the Commissioner of Lands & Mines had recommended the estates be sold following a transitional period under Government control. Rather we are faced, therefore, with a piece of ex post facto rationalisation on the part of the colonial executive, and when I come to consider the political implications of this decision the need for this rationalisation will become apparent.

Furthermore by 1915 the officials were still actively pursuing the hope of leasing the Hague lands to neighbouring sugar estates. Colony Lands were under the control of the Governor-in-Council and the Executive Council decided on 15th June 1915 to offer Hague to the proprietors of Leonora estate on a 99 years lease. Only if this failed would the lands be leased to peasant smallholders (Minutes of the Executive Council, 15th June 1915, p. 5, CO 114/144) The situation was further complicated by the legality of the arrangements under which the land was occupied by existing settlers. Nevertheless this confused beginning was crucial for the development of Government plans for the estates, in that it established precedents by which officials later felt bound.

The problem was later amplified in the Memorandum which the Commissioner prepared for forwarding to London:

"Moreover, having entered into the agreement to lease, it would be a grave breach of faith on the part of the Government to disposess those men who have taken up land and already expended a large amount of labour on preparing it for Rice, but who cannot afford to purchase. In fact, I believe the Government would be open to an action at law."

(Memorandum from Commissioner of Lands & Mines, enclosure with Clementi to Long, 30th December 1916, item 441, British Guiana file 6486)

This in turn elicited the following response from the officials of the Colonial Office in London:

"The Government is already practically pledged to lease the bulk of the land to East Indian settlers."

(comment on Clementi to Long, No.441 of 30th December 1916, CO 111/608)

The Secretary of State for the Colonies then informed the Officer Administering the Government (Clementi):

"I would, of course, not be prepared to approve any course involving a breach of faith with existing cultivators."

(Long to Clementi, No.67 of 1st March 1917, British Guiana file 6486)

Thus the Government's stance on the desirability of leasing the land to small scale peasant cultivators was to a large extent determined by decisions taken at a very early date and without the benefit of the fuller investigations that took place later. It therefore seems likely that the leasing of the land in this way was less of the consciously engineered "experiment" the Colonial Secretary presented it as being in 1916 and rather a commitment hastily entered into and later found to be difficult to get out of.

Nevertheless the formal decision to lease the lands was taken in 1915, when as a result of pressure from the elected members of the Combined Court the Government undertook to bring forward proposals concerning the future of the West Demerara Estates (Combined Court Debate of 15th March 1915, enclosure with 8956, CO 111/608). There is no mention of why the term of 99 years was chosen, despite the substantial documentation on the issue of leasing per se. It is also puzzling that there appears to have been no discussion of the length of the leases in the Combined Court and it is hard to imagine why this lengthy and rigid limit was agreed to. For although such leases were presumably common for Crown Land, usually taken up by estates (as indeed the Hague lands were offered to Leonora), there is a substantial difference between a basic lease of land on which the lessee has to pay all charges, and one which contains a substantial amount of maintainance and facilities. One possible explanation is that a 99 year lease represents standard English legal practice, but even so one would still expect some justification, especially since the implications were so considerable.

It must have been clear to all that the amount of work and expense entailed by the proposed terms of the leases was potentially very great, and one wonders why no clear provision was made for the re-assessment of the rent, even at fairly lengthy intervals. Presumably the over-riding consideration was the desire to avoid the problems of annual assessment for rates to which the members of the McNeill and Chiman Lal Commission had drawn attention, but even so the provisions of the leases for the West Demerara Estates do seem uncommonly generous. Needless to say this generosity has been greatly regretted by later administrations, for most of these leases are still in existence and the rental remains \$6 per acre per annum, which means in turn that the Government makes a substantial loss on the estates each year.

The leases were evidently seen as attractive for the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines states:

"The surveying of these estates [Windsor Forest and La Jalousie] into lots to be let out on lease to small holders at a fixed annual rent of \$6 per acre has been completed and at 31st December 851 acres had been taken up for cultivation. Applications were filed for a considerably larger area."

(Report of Commissioner of Lands & Mines 1916, at para.67, CO 114/158)

Thus the "experiment" of leasing the land for small rice cultivators seemed to have got off to a flying start. But in fact the main precipitating factor in this process was the concern and opposition expressed by the elected members of the Combined Court. They were continually worried about the drain on the Colony's finances which these estates represented.

THE PRESSURE FOR SALE

From the very beginning the elected members of the Combined Court, were hostile to the idea of the West Demerara Estates being owned by Government. On 10th May 1909 Mr. Dias asked what security there was for the money expended on Windsor Forest's sea defences and expressed concern that the owners were reducing the value of the estate by removing machinery and buildings. On 28th September 1909 Mr. McArthur wanted to know just what the justification for the Government's control of the estates was and how much this control was costing, which produced the far from reassuring reply that the sea defences were estimated to cost \$43,000, of which \$12,883 had already been spent, against a return of \$732.31 (Minutes of the Combined Court, CO 114/129). Perhaps not surprisingly the same Mr. McArthur proposed a motion at the meeting of the Combined Court on 25th February 1910 to the effect that the failure to press the lien on the estate had resulted in "great loss to the Colony and in undue advantage being given the proprietors of the said estate" (Minute of the Combined Court, CO 114/132). The motion was not carried.

On 28th February 1911 Mr. McArthur wanted to know how diligently the Government was seeking to obtain from the former owners of La Jalousie their contribution to water rates prior to Government purchase (Minutes of the Combined Court, CO 114/137). On 21st February 1912 it was Mr. Dias who wanted to know if the Government was considering La Jalousie as a site for an Agricultural College - but it had been decided to locate this at Onderneeming in Essequibo. By 1913 Mr. Dias was becoming more insistent:

"Do the Government propose to dispose of the lands of Plns. Windsor Forest, La Jalousie, Unity, Lancaster and Hague, if so, when?

Is His Excellency the Governor aware of a resolution of this Court disapproving of the Government holding lands?"

(Minutes of Combined Court, 4th March 1913 p.25, CO 114146)

To this the Governor gave the brief response that all was being done that could be done but that "the Government has no power to compel the people to purchase" (ibid).

In 1915 the matter came up again sharply when Mr. Brown asked:

"Has the Government received any applications for the purchase of any or of all of these estates [Windsor Forest, La Jalousie and Hague]; if so why the offers have not been accepted?"

(Minutes of the Combined Court, 15th March 1915, p.25, CO 114/153)

Not surprisingly, during the debate that ensued the elected members continually pressed for the sale of the estates in Government hands and Mr.Dias found the disclosure of a loss of \$12,000 over the preceding three years "somewhat appalling" (ibid).

This was a very crucial debate as far as the Government Estates were concerned, for eventually the Governor retreated a little in the face of the opposition of the elected members and agreed to consult with the Commissioner of Lands & Mines to see "if there was any possibility of getting rid of these lands" (ibid). It was this consultation which led to the decision in the Executive Council in June 1915 to lease out the lands rather than sell them.

The elected members nevertheless continued to press for the sale of the lands and in November 1915 Mr.Dias successfully moved a reduction

of the allocation for Windsor Forest and La Jalousie, a favourite and frequently successful ploy, from \$6,902 to \$6,500 (Minutes of Combined Court 22nd November 1915, enclosed with Clementi to Long No.441 of 30th December 1915, CO 111/608). Mr. Brown also stated:

"The wish of the elective section is that these properties should be sold. I don't know why the Government is so fond of hampering itself with lands in this way and I think the sooner it gets rid of them the better."

(ibid)

Despite a clear statement that the lands had been leased out for 99 years the elected members again pressed this matter of sale in the meeting of 17th November 1916, when Mr. Brassington claimed:

"The Elective Members are pledged to give the Government six months expenditure to run the estates and to ask that the properties be disposed of by the 30th June 1917."

(Combined Court Debates, 17th November 1917)

The motion was seconded by Mr. Brown, who finished:

"The Court should compel the Government to sell these properties."

(ibid)

There followed a lengthy debate about the history and philosophy of leasing the estates, and despite an appeal by the Governor for him not to press the motion, Mr. Brassington nevertheless did so and it was carried 11 to 9, with all the elected members but one voting for and all the official section solidly against. The Governor was therefore obliged to undertake to set up a Committee to report on the future of the estates (Clementi to Long No.441 of 30th December 1916, File 8956, CO 111/608).

Despite the undoubted ideological differences involved in the dispute the officials saw that there were other more mercenary motives involved as well.

"However on 10th June last [1916] a wealthy East Indian called Boodhoo resident on plantation Windsor Forest where he owns a rice mill, and proprietor of land at Hague as well as at Windsor Forest, applied to purchase all the land owned by the Government at Windsor Forest and La Jalousie as he proposed to erect a small cane factory in the district."

(ibid)

This application was considered by the Officer Administering the Government, the Commissioner of Lands & Mines, the Director of Science & Agriculture and the Government Secretary.

"Professor Harrison [D.S.A.] ascertained that Boodhoo had obtained through Messrs Sandbach Parker & Co an estimate for sugar making machinery from the Squires Manufacturing Co, Philadelphia USA, for the treatment of between 75 to 80 tons of sugar cane a day, the quotation amounting in round figures to \$24,000 for the machinery delivered at the factory in Philadelphia; and it was estimated by the D.S.A. that an equal sum would have to be spent on freight etc of the machinery, its erection and the necessary buildings, that is to say a total outlay of \$50,000 was involved, a sum beyond the means both of Boodhoo and another East Indian, Abdool Rayman who was associated with him in the scheme."

(ibid)

This is a fine example of the pervasive power of the colonial administration, and it is presumably precisely because he was aware that the Sandbach Parker Company would have no scruples about revealing details of his enquiries to the Government that Boodhoo made them in the first place. However the officials, especially the Commissioner of Lands & Mines, were not taken in:

"He [C.L.M.] did not believe that Boodhoo had any intention of erecting a factory, and thought that his sole idea was to get possession of the estates and farm them out, thereby making a handsome profit."

(ibid)

Not surprisingly Boodhoo's application was not successful, since the O.A.G. was advised by his officials:

"...that it was quite out of the question to consider the idea of leasing the two estates as a whole, seeing that almost all the land had been already let to small farmers, and that it would be a grave breach of faith on the part of the Government now to hand over the lessees to a new landlord."

(ibid)

However this does not appear to have deterred Boodhoo and Rayman, for the O.A.G. also reported:

"It would appear probable that their next step was to approach certain elective members of the Combined Court to press the matter on their behalf, for at the Annual Session of the Combined Court on the 17th November last [1916] the elective members, with one exception (Hon. P.N. Brown) contended that these lands should be sold outright; and in order to force that hand of the Government they voted only six months expenditure to carry on the existing system until the 30th June 1917, by which date they desired that all the lands in question should have been disposed of by sale."

(ibid)

THE COMMITTEES OF ENQUIRY

The "wealthy East Indian named Boodhoo" who engineered this debate was a character of great significance in the early years of Windsor Forest, and seemingly an entrepreneur of considerable talent and audacity. Local legend has it that he was a personal servant to the last manager of the sugar estate, Mr. Menzies, at the time the estate was abandoned. The story goes that Menzies took pity on the resident labourers who would, he realised, be deprived of their livelihood and faced a bleak future. In order to assist them all he could he arranged for the standing cane crop to be ground at the nearby Versailles estate, to which it would be taken in large punts through the network of trenches throughout the cultivation area, just as cane from Windsor Forest is transported to the same estate today. Since

the estate was to be abandoned the cane was there for the taking and it was apparently his intention that the estate labourers should cut it and keep the proceeds of the sugar produced.

He apparently told this to Boodhoo, who instead of passing on the news called the labourers together after Menzies's departure and revealed that he, Boodhoo, had arranged to have the cane ground and would pay so much a punt- full. This, unfortunately, was a rate well below the normal one, but was nevertheless the best that could be obtained under the circumstances. Not surprisingly the labourers seized the opportunity and cut the crop, grateful to get anything.

Boodhoo, of course, paid the labourers a low rate for the cane whereas Versailles estate paid him, as the representative of the labourers, the full rate for the cane, as agreed with Menzies. Thus Boodhoo made himself a very substantial profit which allowed him to set himself up in the old manager's house in some style, buy land nearby for rice and a large coconut plantation on the East Coast of Demerara. Later he set himself up in a major import/export business in Georgetown. His son continues to live in Windsor Forest, from where he still controls all these enterprises.

The outcome of the debate in the legislature was the setting up of the Committee to examine the issue, though their deliberations were prefaced by the arrival of over 100 East Indians at the Immigration Agent General's office on 21st November 1916 to plead for the continuation of the leases. It is not surprising therefore that the Officer Administering the Government should advise London:

"I venture to think, therefore, that from every point of view it would be a mistake to interfere with the existing arrangements, which are working smoothly."
(ibid)

However Boodhoo did not get his own way in the matter of acquiring the lands of Windsor Forest and La Jalousie, for on the 31st May 1917 the Committee appointed by the Officer Administering the Government reported that:

"Your Committee are firmly of the the opinion that it would not be in the interest of the peasantry nor to the financial benefit of the colony to disturb the existing lease system."

(Combined Court Paper No. 10340, 1917, at para.18, CO 114/161)

Only the indefatigable Mr. Dias dissented and supported sale. The remainder of the Committee favoured a continuation of the existing lease system, which was to be modified to ensure that the lease could be passed on to an heir, and also to reduce the chance of it being forfeited through failing to fulfill all the terms. All in all the Committee's Report was a vindication of the leasing system and a strengthening of it.

The popularity of the arrangement was borne out by a report by the Commissioner of Lands & Mines who stated that of the 1,294.6 acres which were then available for leasing, "nearly the whole" had been applied for prior to the Combined Court debate of November 1916 but that the farmers had been put off taking up their options by the possibility of getting a new landlord (ibid at para. 6). The same message was received when the Committee visited Windsor Forest and Hague to meet the farmers in February 1917.

"...the smallholders at Windsor Forest and La Jalousie made it clear beyond doubt that they were not in a position to buy the land but wanted the Government to carry out its engagement with regard to the leasing of the land."

(ibid at para.10)

Although the leasehold system had come through a very severe test unscathed, this was far from being the last of the assaults to be made upon it. For in 1921 Clementi, now Governor, appointed a Committee to consider the problem of the leases again. The need for this Committee arose from the fact that post-war inflation had made the administration of the estates uneconomic and they were again losing money - a total of \$8,681 between 1917 and 1920 (Combined Court, Paper No. 11216, 1921, at para.3, CO 114/180). Nevertheless the Committee reported:

"With respect to the practicability of meeting this annual loss by increasing the rate of rental your Committee are unanimously of the opinion after weighing all the facts, that the Government are morally and legally pledged to give the present occupants leases at the rental of \$6.00 originally agreed upon."

(ibid at para.4)

As before a substantial amount of lobbying was done by the settlers to protect their position:

"Deputations from the occupiers of the estates have called upon the Immigration Agent General, the Commissioner of Lands & Mines and other individual members of the Committee and protested against any increase of the rental. They claim that they took up the lands originally and "broke them down" i.e. prepared them for cultivation, on the strength of a clear promise that they would be given leases at \$6 per acre; they state that they are not prepared to pay a higher rate of rental and demand to be given leases at the rate originally fixed."

(ibid)

The Committee felt that the only way to cover the deficit was to economise further on expenditure and they made several recommendations to this end, including cutting the salaries of the overseer and the ranger, and sacking the clerk. However even this was not enough and in 1922 the Combined Court resorted to the time-honoured device of only voting half a year's income to force the Government to sell the

estates. As the Government pointed out this presumably meant that the estates would have to be sold with the leases intact, which would have merely transferred the deficit to the new owner, which was presumably why there was so little interest in purchasing them. This led the Governor to conclude that:

"Generally speaking the leases rendered the estates unsuitable to any other owner but the Government."
(ibid)

THE WORKING OF THE LEASEHOLD SYSTEM

The leases are indeed the key to the nature of these estates and the problems that they have caused. It is also noteworthy that these leases are a form of landholding that was never repeated when other forms of Government-controlled land settlement schemes were devised. If the Government Estates in West Demerara can be thought of as the "experiment" the Government Secretary had spoken so enthusiastically about in 1916, then it was very soon apparent that the "experiment" was a failure.

The main problem with the leases was the failure on the part of Government to include any mechanism that would allow the rental to be increased to cover inflation and rising costs. Although the certainty of the rental was seen as one of the main advantages of the system at the time of its being set up, it eventually became the stranglehold that threatened to choke the administration of the estates. As has been shown, there were numerous attempts to overthrow this rigid commitment, but they all failed because of the legally-binding nature of the leases and their inflexibility.

In addition there was the continual willingness of the settlers to lobby actively to defend what they realised was an advantageous

position. This proven lobbying ability also successfully prevented any politically-originated move to abolish the legal obligations of the Government under the leases. This is an avenue of attack that the settlers have always sought to keep closed, and to date they have succeeded outstandingly. The issue is also a matter of concern to them today, and they continue to defend themselves in this area, as we shall see.

The only significant alteration that has successfully been made to the lease system once these early attempts had failed was a move by later Governments to change the leases should they be held to have lapsed in any way. There was apparently to issue leases for any new land for a shorter period, which was mentioned for the first time after World War II:

An alternative way in which the lease can be shortened is if it is to be transferred from one person to another. If the purchaser does not wish, or is not able, to pay the legal fees involved in this transfer, they can be waived if the new period of lease is reduced. There was considerable feeling in the village about how this provision had worked in the past, for it was frequently claimed that many farmers had been tricked into opting for the reduced lease as a way of saving legal fees, without being told of the reduced tenure involved. Although the transfer of a lease should entail legal procedures, if the transfer is within a family it is very common for the transfer not to be officially recorded at all. This means that officially the lease remains in the name of the former lessee, and in a number of cases this is somebody long since dead.

By the 1950s the deficit on the estates was growing even larger and there was yet another move to resolve the matter.

"Expenditure on maintainance exceeds revenue annually and the question of reducing the annual deficit or of selling the lands outright to the lessees is under consideration."

(Report of the Commissioner of Local Government, 1953, at para.56, CO 114/263)

However yet again the leasehold system weathered the storm, though the files and reports are not available, so that it is not possible to determine how this was achieved.

Although the system of leasing remained essentially the same there was a significant alteration in the rental of some of the new shorter leases:

"A number of agricultural lots have also been leased for a period of 21 years at a rental of \$6.00 per acre per annum with the right of renewal and as any of the existing leases expire new leases are issued for a period of 21 years at a rental of \$15.00 per acre per annum."

(ibid at para.37.5)

The only other modification that has been made to the system is that in the 1960s the decision was made to alter the length of new leases from 21 years to 25 years, with the rental remaining at \$15.00. In view of the rates of inflation that have been experienced since then the decision to fix a rental for even 25 years is beginning to look as inexplicable as the original one which guaranteed a rental for 99 years.

The system of land holding in Windsor Forest and La Jalousie today thus consists of the following categories of lessees of Government land:

- 1) 99 year leases at \$6 per acre per year
- 2) 21 year leases at \$6 per acre per year
- 3) 21 year leases at \$15 per acre per year
- 4) 25 year leases at \$15 per acre per year

THE WEST DEMERARA ESTATES AND COLONIAL POLITICS

An attempt has been made here to show how the chequered history of the West Demerara Estates, and Windsor Forest in particular, developed. Far from being the calculated experiment in land settlement which the Government Secretary of 1916 had vainly tried to present it as being, the history of these estates is one of a series of compromises made in the face of pressing contingent circumstances and constantly under threat. Thus the main determinant of the administrative arrangements covering the estates was not the cool-headed planning of the colonial civil servants, but rather the continual harassment of the elective representatives in the Combined Court and their constant concern about the financial liabilities the estates entailed.

As we have seen they made many attempts to prise the estates out of Government's hands and dispose of them on the open market. The only things that stopped them were the legally binding leases, which had first emerged as a verbal agreement at the time the estates came under Government control by accident and which gradually acquired more legal solidity over time. Although there is ample evidence of the support of the officials for this form of settlement, both in Guyana and in

London, the only effective defence they had against the attacks of the elective members was the legal obligation to the settlers. There were numerous attempts to prove that the estates could be made financially viable, but they all failed in practice, and so the legal issue became the one means by which the officials could achieve their policy.

The role of the estates as an item to be fought over in the Combined Court identifies them as part of a much wider struggle between the colonial civil servants and the elected members of the Court. These two groups saw each other as having differing and often conflicting obligations. The official section saw themselves as having a wider responsibility to the population of the Colony as a whole and their best interests. The elected members, on the other hand, often appear to see themselves as primarily representing the financial and commercial interests in the Colony and being concerned to protect profits. This led to their portraying the officials as spendthrift and overly lavish with the Colony's finances, which had to be raised out of their taxes. Although these positions, admittedly rather simplistic, sound like caricatures, they nevertheless represent the sentiments frequently expressed in the debates of the Combined Court of the time.

In this conflict the officials had the inestimable advantage of direct access to the Colonial Office and the Secretary of State, and we have seen this operating in the case of Windsor Forest. On the other hand the elected members had the constitutional power of the purse, in that they had the right to vote on items of expenditure, and this power was used to significant effect in the history of the West Demerara Estates, especially over the setting up of the Committee of Enquiry in 1916.

The conflicts over the Government Estates is a good example of the struggle between the electives and the officials, with the complaint of the former being well summed up in a debate on Windsor Forest held in 1915. Mr.A.B. Brown complained then that:

"The point is that the lands should be sold. If we make any recommendations the Government ought to attempt to adopt it instead of outwitting this Court."

(Debate of Combined Court, 22nd November 1915, Enclosed with Clementi to Long No.441 of 30th December 1915, CO 111/608)

On the other hand the general view of the officials was presented in a debate on the same topic in 1916. On being pressed to adhere to a previous resolution of the Court against the Government holding land, the Government Secretary replied:

"When these lands [the West Demerara Estates] came into the hands of the Government it could not sell them out as a whole, and when the resolution that has been referred to was passed I think it was mentioned that a sale was not to take place unless the Government got a decent figure. It was never understood to be the intention that the Government should cut the loss at any price."

(Debate of the Combined Court, 17th November 1916)

In this contest of wills and apparent philosophies the crux of the debate was money, with the financial viability of the estates the continual issue. In this the initiative lay with the officials, since the estates were already in Government hands, which in turn led to their being primarily concerned to show that the estates could be made financially viable under their control.

The attempt to establish this prospect led to a series of very optimistic statements and projections by officials, all of which showed that the estates were about to make a profit, and all of which were wrong. For history has shown that the worst fears of the

electives have been born out and that the estates have been a financial liability for most of their time in Government hands.

The process began in 1911 when the Commissioner of Lands & Mines was predicting :

"I estimate that the necessary extra work to enable my suggestion to be adopted will cost \$3,800, and that after the first year we shall obtain a revenue of \$9,880 from rents of land, and \$420 from pasturage, or \$10,300 in all, and an annual expenditure of about \$4,300."

(Minute of Commissioner of Lands & Mines, Combined Court Paper No.600, 1911, at para.12, CO 114/137)

The flaw in this blissful picture of a comfortable \$6,000 profit each year is revealed later, when the Commissioner mentions "...and in 4 or 5 years time when I hope the sea defence question will be settled...". The "sea defence question" was an expenditure of some \$127,175 (Minutes of the Combined Court, 27th February 1912, p.69, CO 114/141). On the matter of how this "question" was to be resolved the Commissioner is silent, but it is certain that his \$6,000 per annum from rents would not offer much help.

By 1916 the same Commissioner, Mr. Fowler, had an even sadder tale to tell, with the expenditure on sea defences having risen to \$234,000, which when combined with the \$52,824 spent on the estates themselves gave a total indebtedness of \$286,830 (Memorandum from Commissioner of Lands & Mines, 5th December 1916, BG File 6486). Nevertheless Mr. Fowler still felt that rentals from leasing would bring in a total revenue of \$17,400 per annum, with an estimated expenditure of \$8,000 per annum "...shewing a possible clearance of \$9,000 per annum to go towards reduction of debt" (ibid at para. 12).

As Table 2/1 shows the largest surplus achieved at this time was \$2,808.49 in 1918 - a far cry from the \$9,000 estimated, and a far cry too from the picture presented by the Governor at that time:

"We have now therefore reached the turning point. We shall from this point onwards make a considerable profit and not adding annually to our loss."

(Debate, Combined Court, 17th November 1916)

As the Table shows, for the 37 years for which I have figures the estates showed a surplus in only 10 of them. On no occasion did this surplus even reach one third of the figure of \$9,000 predicted by the Commissioner of Lands & Mines.

Even the Committee that was set up following the pressure to sell the estates ended up supporting this official analysis:

"In 1919 and subsequent years the surplus revenue will be \$9,986...At the end of the year 1925 the Government's losses will have been recouped in the form of an investment of \$167,310 giving 6% per annum interest. If the interest continues to be applied to reducing the sum of \$167,310 in less than 17 years more it will all have been paid off and an annual revenue of \$9,986 set free."

(Report of the Committee on the Sale of Colony Lands, Combined Court Paper No.10340 1917, at para.7, CO 114/161)

Such naive optimism leading to the making of such specific predictions is engaging, but as events showed, a poor guide to reality.

TABLE 2/1.
Income and Expenditure - Windsor Forest

YEAR	INCOME (\$)	EXPENDITURE (\$)	DIFFERENCE (\$)
1911	588.14	995.75	- 407.61
1912	426.56	2199.39	- 1772.83
1913	4252.05	3525.80	+ 726.25
1914	4506.98	5365.06	- 858.08
1915	4229.60	4432.31	- 202.71
1916	4985.44	5814.40	- 828.96
1917	3360.61	3708.90	- 348.29
1918	7191.64	4383.15	+ 2808.49
1919	5522.51	4407.41	+ 1115.10
1920	3720.10	3735.27	- 15.17
1921	1944.08	4667.59	- 2723.51
1922	3231.55	4008.99	- 777.44
1923	4710.95	3559.96	+ 1150.99
1924	4662.51	3423.91	+ 1238.60
1925	3379.06	2757.64	+ 621.42
1926	2554.30	3748.31	- 1194.01
1927	3401.71	3275.27	+ 126.44
1928	6248.38	3361.76	+ 2886.62
1929	3844.90	5229.12	- 1384.22
*1930	6833.07	9315.74	- 2482.67
*1931	9184.91	7128.71	- 2056.20
**1938	11312.28	11455.04	- 142.76
1947	17283.07	16628.76	+ 654.31
1948	16290.74	21459.59	- 5168.85
1949	14957.11	31544.69	-16587.58
1950	13684.28	35575.23	-21890.95
1951	18935.78	38313.59	-19377.81
1952	14189.59	31488.73	-17299.14
1953	13836.62	31941.21	-17104.59
1954	17118.94	28632.88	-11513.94
1955	17400.98	45980.00	-28579.02
1956	16931.50	37604.00	-20672.50
1957	23663.00	38609.00	-13946.00
1958	27492.00	42443.00	-14951.00
1959	9439.00	36576.00	-27137.00
1960	13603.00	36401.00	-22798.00
1961	23945.00	38461.00	-14516.00

Source: Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines
 Annual Reports of the Land Development Department
 Annual Reports of the Land Settlement Department

* Includes La Jalousie and Windsor Forest

** From 1938 all figures refer to the Government Estates,
 West Demerara (Windsor Forest, La Jalousie, Hague)

The nearest that the estates ever came to making a surplus was in the 1920s after the second Committee to consider the possibility of sale had reported. Their conclusion, as we have seen, was that sale was out of the question, but that the estates' losses should be reduced by stringent economies. These were to consist primarily of reducing the Overseer's salary by one third, reducing the wages of the rangers and sacking the clerk (Report on the Terms of the Lease of Colony Lands, Combined Court Paper No.11216 1921 at para.5, CO 114/180). Most of the remaining years of the 1920s showed a surplus, including the largest one ever of \$2,886 in 1928. However this strict regime meant skimping on essential maintainance, which in turn left further problems for the future, as we shall see. Even so it did not manage to produce the surpluses so confidently predicted by earlier estimates.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The history of the early years of these settlements has been presented in detail to illustrate not only the formative influences on the character of the settlements, but also the extent to which the same themes can be seen recurring down the years. As has been seen the early years were often stormy ones but by the 1920s the settlements were firmly established and there were no further major alterations to their status or administration until the changes to the leases after the Second World War. This early period established some characteristics that were to be very significant for later events, and for the moulding of the attitudes of later generations of settlers and administrators. Among these the main ones were:

a) The experimental nature of the settlements.

Although it has been shown that the early establishment of the

settlements was not as organised and intentional as the officials involved sought to imply there is nevertheless a clear thread running through their arguments that this administrative arrangement for the West Demerara Estates should be seen in the light of previous land settlement experiments and their failings.

b) That the settlements have a protective role.

Official statements are also full of indications that the West Demerara Estates should serve to protect the labourers faced with destitution after the abandonment of the estates, and also to offer the opportunity for the "small man" to develop a stake in the country. The term the "small man" echoes down the years, from the rhetoric of the debates in the Combined Court just after the turn of the century, to the rhetoric of Government mobilisation campaigns in the 1970s which spoke of "the small man" as the "real man".

Thus the rental set at \$6 in 1909 and confirmed in 1915 seems to have been a deliberately favourable one by the standards of the time. Similarly the speed with which the leases were taken up, despite the view of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines that there was "little or no drainage" on the estates at the time indicates the attractiveness of the rentals. Thus the Committee set up to consider the future of the leasehold system found in 1917 that all the land available for cultivation in Windsor Forest and La Jalousie had been taken up (Report of the Committee on the Sale of Colony Lands, Combined Court Paper No.10340 1917, at para.6, CO 114/161).

c) An acceptance that the estates did not have to be profitable.

Although there was considerable effort on the part of the

officials to try to show that the estates could be profitable, these exercises nevertheless have all the characteristics of official window-dressing. They were based in the most part on a series of very dubious assumptions and seem to have been designed to meet the specific challenge made by the elective members of the Combined Court. On the other hand the officials showed in their administrative decisions no opposition to proposing substantial expenditure on the estates when they felt it necessary. This pattern is part of the central problem of agriculture in Guyana, where the demands of sea defence are so insistent and so expensive. Nevertheless the history of income and expenditure for the estates, and the relatively fixed nature of the former, must have brought a realisation in the early years that they could not pay their way.

One interesting point is that throughout all this time the Government on the whole fulfilled its obligations to maintain the estates. Its administration was cut back to the minimum in the 1920s so that in 1938 the Commissioner of Labour & Local Government reported that:

"Only the minimum essential maintainance works have been budgeted for in the past and extensive reconditioning of the roads, dams, bridges, trenches, and cattle pastures and repairs to the aqueduct to facilitate transport of produce have now become necessary."

(Report of the Commissioner of Labour & Local Government 1938, at para.119, CO 114/227)

Nevertheless the rate of Government expenditure picked up after this and so did the losses on the estates, culminating in the figure of \$21,890 in 1950, the largest deficit in any one year. The pattern of high quality maintainance has continued from that time to the present and the estates are

well recognised as having some of the best drainage and irrigation facilities in the country.

- d) That the advantages enjoyed by the settlers were continually at risk and had to be defended.

We have seen how the settlers responded to the demands in the Combined Court in 1916 for the investigation of the possibility of selling the lands - over 100 came to the Immigration Agent General's office in Georgetown to register their opposition to the sale of the lands. When the issue was again considered by the Government in 1923 there was a similar response, as the Governor reported (Minutes of the Combined Court 13th June 1923, CO 114/186). These were the beginnings of a tradition of resistance and hostility to what were seen as the machinations of Governments determined to renege on their obligations. There were numerous examples of such attempts in later years, at this statement shows

"The possibility of reducing the annual deficit or of selling the lands outright to the lessees is under consideration."

(Report of the Commissioner of Local Government 1952, p.97, CO 114/262)

Needless to say, in view of the history of similar attempts at implementing such a policy, nothing came of this initiative.

However, it is worth noting here that this robust and continuing opposition to the policies of Government arose precisely because the settlers were entirely dependent on Government for the advantages that they were so anxious to protect, both historically in terms of the setting up and survival of the settlements, and currently in terms of the extent to which Government chooses to fulfil its obligations honourably and efficiently, which indeed it has done. This very

ambivalent relationship is a topic to which I shall be returning later.

This Chapter has sought to set out some of the major structural factors affecting the character of the village and its relations to external power sources which continued to have a decisively moulding influence in the years that followed the formation of the Land Settlement Scheme. In particular I have tried to emphasise the extent to which, from the very foundation of the Scheme, the decision-making of the settlers was constrained within a context which was determined by forces external to the community. Thus the officials of the New Colonial Company who decided to abandon the estate, the colonial officials who favoured the formation of the Land Settlement Scheme, the Governor who supported it, the Financial Representatives who opposed it and finally the Colonial Office in London who were willing to back their officials with the power of their ultimate control, all form part of this inter-connected system which had such a determining effect on the community and its activities.

We can also see in this situation many of the characteristics of creole society, from the commercial perspectives of the planter interests in the shape of the Financial Representatives, to the ethnic stereotypes which motivated the colonial officials of both Georgetown and London. We can also see the Indian settlers appearing to be very investment-oriented as they sought eagerly for the opportunity to obtain access to the village's lands. For from the very beginning the rationale of the Land Settlement Scheme was that it should offer the prospect of cash-crop rice farming. Nevertheless, having secured access to their 'ecological niche' the early settlers had to set about

exploiting its potential. The way in which they did this, and the characteristics of this system of production will be discussed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

WINDSOR FOREST AND THE TRADITIONAL SYSTEM OF PRODUCTION

- Introduction
- The Establishment of Rice Farming
- The Establishment of Milling
- The Traditional System of Production
- Milling
- The Farm Enterprise
- Summary and Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

The preceding Chapter has discussed the establishment of the Land Settlement Scheme and the thinking that lay behind it. The settlers had displayed a marked interest in acquiring the land, as we have seen, and in this they demonstrated a very 'modern' investment approach. At the same time they were also constrained by a number of factors, not the least of which was the fact that the estate was still laid out for cane cultivation and thus had to be converted to rice, a very arduous task. They also had very little in the way of capital and the marketing system for rice, both internally and externally, was still only rudimentary. In addition the new settlers had to evolve a system of rice production, since this was to be their main source of livelihood. Whilst it is likely that most would have had some experience of cultivating rice on sugar estates, they were now in a relatively new situation in which new forms of organisation and co-operation had to be developed. The system of production that emerged was based on the family farming unit, though with strong communal inputs and constraints at certain times, and it is to the characteristics of this system that I now turn.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RICE FARMING

We have seen in the last Chapter how there was a good deal of interest shown in the lands of Windsor Forest, and we can now try to discover what the settlers did with this land and how successful they were, especially in view of all the bold assertions that had been made about their best interests. The clear intention of Government and most others involved was that the lands should be leased out for rice cultivation. This is in fact what happened and all the West Demerara Estates have remained in this use ever since.

Although Windsor Forest had not only been a sugar estate but also the only one in the immediate vicinity that could still grind, it was no stranger to rice cultivation prior to its abandonment. Mention has already been made of the way in which estates encouraged labourers to plant rice during the sugar depression at the end of the last century in order to retain an available labour supply in case of an upturn in trade, and this seems to be what also happened at Windsor Forest. Several elderly residents in the village who could remember the estate time or its aftermath reported that the manager, Mr. Menzies, had grown rice on his own account and one put this at 50 acres.

Certainly Windsor Forest featured prominently in the nascent rice industry during the early years of this century for the Report of the Immigration Agent General (I.A.G.) for 1905/6 mentions a rice mill at Windsor Forest, the only one reported for West Demerara (Report of Immigration Agent General for 1905/6 p.16, CO 114/112). The Report mentions it as being owned by a Chinaman, and by 1907 he was identified as being Mr. Fong-Ke-Fong, by which time there were three mills in West Demerara and some 44 in the country as a whole (Report of the Immigration Agent General 1906/7, p.15, CO 114/116). The introduction of mechanical milling into Guyana is usually attributed to the formation of the Guiana Rice Co. and the establishment of a mill in Georgetown in 1896 (Report of the Immigration Agent General 1896/7). However a pamphlet published by the Guyana Rice Corporation "The Story of Rice in Guyana", boldly states that:

"The first single stage mill was put down at Windsor Forest on the W.C.D."

(ibid:41)

No evidence for this statement is offered and so it should be treated with some caution. Nevertheless it is possible that the Windsor

Forest mill was established at an early date, for one of my old informants stated that the mill was originally established by the manager, Mr. Menzies, and later sold to Fung-Ke-Fung (as he was known in the village).

Also the official figures indicate that there was considerable rice growing in the area in the early years of the century, thus offering scope for a mill. The only sources of detailed figures for the time are the Reports of the Immigration Agent General (I.A.G.). From 1906, when figures for West Demerara started, until the time of the abandonment of the estate, Windsor Forest appears not only as one of the largest East Indian populations still resident on an estate, but also as one of the largest acreages of rice cultivation (CO 114).

One of the things that is most interesting about these early figures is the picture of the estate prior to its abandonment that they present, for in 1904/5 the I.A.G.'s Report shows there to have been 70 indentured East Indians on Windsor Forest, along with 1,338 non-indentured ones. This is a total of 1,408 persons who between them cultivated 800 acres of rice (Report I.A.G. 1905/6, p.16, CO 114/112). This is a very striking figure for a sugar estate, especially since the total acreage of Windsor Forest is only 997, of which 585 were available for cultivation at that time (Report of Committee on the Sale of Colony Lands, Combined Court No. 10340 1917, at para.6, CO 114/161). The I.A.G.'s report does not mention La Jalousie, which had a cultivation area of 1025 acres (ibid), nor the immediately neighbouring estates. It is therefore likely that the estate residents of the time cultivated rice land on the surrounding estates too. This is confirmed by an elderly informant who claimed

that labourers were offered small plots of up to 2 acres on Ruimzicht adjoining Windsor Forest. If, however, this estate was owned by the proprietors of Windsor Forest, why was it not considered for purchase along with Windsor Forest and La Jalousie? There is no mention of it in any of the official records as far as I can find.

Nevertheless it is interesting that in 1956 when the community had been concentrating on rice production for more than forty years a population of 2,350 (some 67% larger than in 1905/6) cultivated a rice acreage that was only 84% larger than at the time when the village was still a sugar estate (R.T. Smith 1957). Indeed there are some indications that this involvement with rice cultivation in the early years of the this century might have been even greater, for in 1911 we learn that:

"Allowing for the absence of returns from Pln. Windsor Forest on which last year there was a cultivation of 1,000 acres...."

(Report of the I.A.G. 1910/11, p.16, CO 114/135)

The absence of returns was no doubt occasioned by the abandonment of the estate, but the figure of 1,000 acres under rice is remarkable.

Official figures in the form of censuses and the Reports of the I.A.G. all show the same clear pattern of a decline immediately following the abandonment of the estate, with the lowest point being encountered at the time of the 1911 census. The same pattern emerges for the acreage under cultivation, which plummeted at this time. However, thereafter the situation began to improve, with the area available for cultivation showing an increase by 1913. There was a further decline in 1917 at the time when the possible sale of the estates was under discussion, but from that time on the lands have

been continually popular, with the largest acreage leased being recorded in 1921. Indeed the Committee investigating the possible sale of the West Demerara Estates found in 1917 that all Windsor Forest's cultivation land was leased and that more than half of La Jalousie's (Report of Committee on Sale of Colony Lands, Combined Court No. 10340 1917, p.3, CO 114/161). Thereafter all the lands of Windsor Forest have always been let, and those of La Jalousie almost always.

The people too recovered from the 1911 setback for as the Commissioner of Lands & Mines (C.L.M.) reported in 1913, most of the land was "...rented chiefly by East Indians residing on the estates" (Report of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines 1912/13, at para 57, CO 114/143). The predominance of East Indians and their absolute numbers grew apace, so that at the time of the 1921 Census Windsor Forest was one of the twelve largest East Indian village populations in the country.

At the time of the original abandonment of the estate apart from cutting the 'ratoon' canes (the new growth that follows the cutting of the cane) the residents also 'minded' cows (as the Guyanese idiom has it). The movement of East Indians off the estates at the end of the last century was often associated with a switch to cattle rearing and this interest in pastoralism must also have been true of the residents of Windsor Forest, for in his original Minute of 1911 the C.L.M. recommended that provision be made for cattle. Furthermore the Report for 1911/12 shows 102 acres rented for rice cultivation, but 200 rented for cattle rearing (Report of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines 1911/12, at para 67, CO 114/139).

The pasture recommended by the C.L.M. was laid out and fenced in Windsor Forest. It comprised 225 acres in all and remains to this day, with the shape of the old cane beds clearly visible under the grass. The popularity of the pasture must have been considerable for in 1927 he reported:

"All the abandoned lands aback Windsor Forest and La Jalousie abutting on the Boerarserie Conservancy were fenced in during the year under report and opened for agistment of cattle in April. This new pasture comprises 296.675 acres of Windsor Forest land and 232.421 acres of La Jalousie land."

(Report of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines, 1927, at para 51, CO 114/204)

Not all of the pasturage was for cows, for the 'savannah' (as the land at the back of the cultivation area was called) was primarily used for the pasturing of the oxen required for cultivating rice. Thus the expansion of pasturage available is an indication of the expansion of rice cultivation and the use of working animals.

However first of all the land had to be converted from cane use. Despite the references in the Reports of the I.A.G. to the large acreages of rice cultivated by the residents prior to the abandonment of the estate, I am sure that most of Windsor Forest and La Jalousie were still laid out for cane cultivation. Similarly I am sure that the use of both estates for cattle grazing would have been a result of allowing the cane beds to remain unweeded and the complete abandonment of cane planting with the end of the estate regime. Nevertheless the land would still remain laid out for cane cultivation. The Commissioner of Lands & Mines' conviction that, "land after being put in rice cultivation is practically useless." (Combined Court Debate, 17th November 1916), is no doubt based on the fact that rice and cane have very different layouts and water patterns.

The primary need for cane in the Guyanese situation is for drainage, whereas for rice it is for both drainage and irrigation. Cane is planted in beds raised up to ensure that the base of the plant is above the level of the water in the drainage channel formed between the beds. This channel led to larger drains, and these to still larger ones until the largest drainage trenches were reached. The result is that even a small area such as a acre is dissected with a series of drains carrying the water from the raised beds and the growing plants.

This is very different from the needs of rice, where the fundamental requirement is for completely flat land with no high spots. Furthermore the flat area can be much larger than with cane, with five acres being common and even larger areas possible under extensive cultivation methods. With wet rice cultivation it is necessary to drain the field completely before harvesting, and for this field drains are required. They need, however, only be shallow depressions in the soft mud and do not correspond in any way to the considerably more substantial drains to be found in cane fields.

Thus the cane land had to be broken down and re-formed for rice cultivation. This was a most arduous task that entailed removing the roots of the canes, filling in the drains and levelling the cane beds. This all had to be done by hand and it is not surprising that farmers today talk with pride of how their parents or grandparents coped with this massive task. Although some were able to employ labourers to do the work, most had to do it themselves, with the result that there was an effective limit on the amount of land that a farmer could undertake to lease. For not only would he be required to convert the land in

order to be able to use it, he was also formally required to do so by the terms of his lease, with forfeiture for those who did not comply. That this requirement was seen as onerous is born out by the recommendation of the 1917 Committee that:

"The condition requiring the lessee to cultivate and maintain in cultivation the whole of the area comprised in his lease might reasonably we think be modified to a requirement that a minimum of one fourth of the area shall be maintained in cultivation."

(Report of the Committee on the Sale of Colony Lands, Combined Court No. 10304, 1917, at para 19, CO 114/161)

Furthermore, since the estates were laid out in fields of 10 to 15 acres divided by major trenches which it would have been very difficult to modify, the original settlers worked within this framework. This meant that the plots contained within the same field would have to be cultivated at approximately the same time, for if one farmer is taking in irrigation water it would be difficult to keep it out of a neighbouring plot, even allowing for the bund walls between plots. There would therefore be understandable pressure on farmers to cultivate their land at the same time, and in the case of the early settlers to clear it at the same time.

The 1917 Committee found that the land was predominantly leased to small farmers in blocks of less than 5 acres (ibid:3). Thus in Windsor Forest some 86% of farmers had plots of less than 5 acres, with 11% having between 5 and 9 acres and only 3% having more. The emphasis on small acreages was even more marked in the cases of La Jalousie and Hague, where 92% and 99% respectively of farmers had less than 5 acres. Over the years the size of holdings has increased, but not greatly. Thus in 1972 nearly half (47%) of East Indian farmers in Windsor Forest had less than 5 acres of rice land.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MILLING

The cultivation of rice continued to expand however, for the valuation assessment done for the 1917 Committee reported that there were now two mills in Windsor Forest (ibid:at para 16). One of these was the one belonging to Fung-Ke-Fung referred to before, whilst the other belonged to Boodhoo who had bought it from the proceeds of his sale of cane to Versailles estate at the time of the abandonment of the estate (reputed to have netted him \$13,600) This development was encouraging, for as the I.A.G. had said:

"The people still resort to using primitive methods for cleaning and preparing the grain after harvest. But as a sign of progress it may be noted that there is now at Pln. Windsor Forest a rice mill owned by a chinaman in which the paddy can be cleaned at the rate of two paraffin tins (10 gallons of paddy) for sixpence [12c]. Ten gallons of paddy usually yield to about half that quantity of clean rice."

(Report of Immigration Agent General,
1905/6, p 16, CO 114/112)

The practice of charging farmers for the milling of their padi described above is what is known as 'toll milling' and has become the norm in West Demerara. On the other hand Boodhoo used to buy padi directly from the farmers, which is a practice common elsewhere in the country. Toll milling has the advantage for the farmer that the padi and rice belong to him along with the by-products, so that he is able to get the benefit of the sale of any or all of these items.

However it is inherently risky in that the farmer is gambling on the final value of the rice and its marketability. He may also have to wait a considerable time to see the final realisation of his investment. On the other hand selling padi means that the miller is able to benefit from the final sale price of the rice, and having more resources is better able to hold back stocks till the time for sale is

right. He therefore is more likely to make better profits than the farmer dependent on the state of the market when the rice is ready for sale. However the selling of padi does mean that the farmer gets his cash in hand as quickly as possible, which is the attractive feature of the system as far as he is concerned and is largely responsible for the continued existence of this potentially exploitative procedure.

The extent to which the farmer is at the mercy of the miller under a system of selling padi is something that has been inveighed against for a long time, and there are many examples of millers taking advantage of the situation. It is noteworthy, therefore, that this system never really became common in Windsor Forest and environs, so that when there were a dozen mills working in the village almost all of them worked on a toll milling basis. Farmers coped with this by taking loans from the millers against the profit from the crop. Although they paid a high rate of interest on these loans, they were still able to maintain a high level of formal independence with ultimate control of their crop and its products. This degree of independent control helped to buttress the autonomy of individual family farming enterprises which so characterises this community.

The other original mill owned by Boodhoo bought padi and apparently lived up to the reputation of other millers who operated this system. Fung-ke-Fung also loaned money for the hiring of labour to help with the breaking of the cane beds, charging interest at the rate of a bag of padi for every \$1 loaned. He also owned two 'salt goods' shops (the family's original activity in the village) and would offer credit here against the crop to be milled in his mill.

As the acreage under rice increased so did the number of mills, till Windsor Forest had the largest concentration in the whole of West Demerara, with 13 of the 42 in the area in 1935 (Burnett 1936:85). Indeed the map accompanying Burnett's article shows Windsor Forest as having the largest concentration of mills in the whole country.

THE TRADITIONAL SYSTEM OF PRODUCTION

By the 1930s the estates had settled down to a regular pattern and the traditional system of production had been established. There were no more fierce political and ideological debates about the future of the lands, and the leasehold system had been firmly established. It appears that the main administrative effort was directed towards maintaining the system with the minimum of expenditure and attempting to keep the finances as near in balance as possible. The Reports of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines for the time are brief and contain little apart from the bare figures of income and expenditure and details of the minor works carried out. This is born out by the newly appointed Commissioner of Labour & Local Government's statement:

"Only the minimum essential maintainance works have been budgeted for in the past, and extensive reconditioning of the roads, dams, bridges, trenches and cattle pastures and repairs to the aqueduct to facilitate the transport of produce have now become necessary."

(Report of the Commissioner of Labour & Local Government, 1938 at para 119, CO 114/227)

We are fortunate in having an account of the characteristics of Windsor Forest rice farmers at this time as a result of a survey carried out in 1937/38 by Huggins (1941). This followed a similar survey of cane farmers which he had carried out in East Coast Demerara in 1936. Of the two areas Huggins states:

"These two area, if judged by appearance, may be considered among the most successful farming areas in the colony, cane farming being the major enterprise in one, rice farming in the other; West Indians preponderate in the one, East Indians in the other."

(Huggins 1941 p. 3)

It is also worth noting that Huggins found that:

"There is no significant difference between the average earnings of a West Demerara rice farmer and an East Demerara cane farmer."

(ibid p. 6)

Although supposedly prosperous and successful rice farmers, the picture of the Windsor Forest settlers that emerges is one of farmers fitting into the traditional Guyanese pattern of engaging in a range of economic activities depending on the seasonal demands of the crop. This had been true at the time of the sugar estate, but even now, with the move to rice cultivation, the seasonal fluctuations in the demands of this crop were also apparent. Thus in the 'Windsor Forest area' (which included Hague, but mostly concentrated on Windsor Forest) only 60% of farm income came from rice, with 15% coming from outside work. Livestock provided 12% and other crops a mere 4%. The income from livestock largely entailed the sale of milk and presumably some meat animals, and indicates yet again the close involvement of East Indian farmers with the cattle industry.

Huggins notes that at Vreed en Hoop, which is just across the river from Georgetown, the proportion of income from livestock was 25%, mainly because of the easier access to the city for milk sales, and he spells out the relative disadvantage of Windsor Forest in this regard. However milk had been sent to Georgetown from Windsor Forest since estate times and the frequent references to the crowded nature of the pasture at Windsor Forest in official reports of the time continued to attest to the significance of this activity for farmers.

The average size of farms in the Windsor Forest area was shown to be 4.39 acres, compared with 6.66 acres in Vreed en Hoop, although the former figures were to some extent reduced by the very small size of the Hague holdings, which were included in the Windsor Forest section (ibid:29). We can therefore assume that Windsor Forest holdings were nearer 5 acres, as they were at the time of the founding of the scheme, and remain so today. Farmers planted both the Spring and Autumn crops and obtained a yield of 12 bags (1680 lbs) per acre from the Spring crop and 20 bags (2800 lbs) from the Autumn crop, which is consistent with other reported yields from the area. Most of the farming activities were performed by the farmer's family:

"The average rice farmer performs the necessary cultural operations with the aid of his family and hired help at planting and reaping."
(ibid p.27)

Thus

"Wages do not play the important part that they do in the cane farming area and the influence on the farmer's profits is not as clearly defined as in East Demerara."
(ibid p. 31)

The area that could most profitably be cultivated by a farmer was constrained by the availability of the appropriate mix of the three factors of production, land, labour and capital. On the Guyanese coast land is always a problem, but Huggins implies that it was not such a pressing problem for the West Demerara farmers and does not mention land shortages or high rents. On the other hand labour was a critical resource since without the right amount of unpaid family labour whose 'opportunity cost' was low the farmer's finances would be very different. The only alternative would have been hired labour, which would have eaten significantly into the farmer's profits. It is therefore not surprising that Huggins reports:

"Out of every ten farmers' children working there are at Windsor Forest eight engaged in agriculture."
(ibid p.31)

However it is in the area of capital that he has most to say, particularly concerning oxen. These were required to plough the land and as general draught animals for hauling the padi from the field to the mill. They were also essential for threshing the harvested padi and thus represented some of the most significant productive capital the farmer owned. As Huggins says:

"There is a very consistent relationship between working oxen per farmer and acres per farmer.....on the average when a farmer owns less than two oxen he cultivates under three acres, when he has two or three oxen he cultivates five acres. The prospects for a farmer with three acres and one with five acres are significantly different."
(ibid p. 29)

There was also another constraint which Huggins evidently did not expect but which nevertheless must have impressed itself upon him, for as he says:

"The conclusion that increasing the size of a farm business pays may appear self-evident, but there is, in practice, not as complete agreement on the point as may be thought. Many a farmer maintains that the small farm business is to be preferred."
(ibid p.30)

This is an extremely interesting statement since it effectively undermines many of the assumptions made by economists and administrators about the motivations and economic rationality of the rice farmers. This is particularly relevant here where the farmers had always been cash-crop producers since the beginning of rice cultivation and were, by the 1930s, oriented towards the export market (and with the Boodhoos as one of the largest traders in this market at the time resident in the village it is inconceivable that farmers were not aware of the export trade). Thus the tendency to assume that such

farmers have a 'professional' or thoroughly 'business-like' approach to their activities is one that is all too easily made.

In some ways they do conform to this 'modernistic' model, in that like all 'reconstituted' New World peasantries they are not really moving from a pattern of subsistence cultivation to a cash economy: their whole presence in Guyana has been determined by the cash economy and the world market - in this case for sugar. On the other hand this very determinism has denied them the freedom of action of modern western 'agribusiness' farmers, for they continue in an economically dependent state. The concepts of the 'Plantation Society' (Beckford 1972, Mandle 1973, R.T. Smith 1962: Chap V, also 1970) which sees the attitudes and orientations of members of societies such as Guyana moulded by the authoritarian structures of the plantation system and the colonial society can help to account for this situation, and will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

Furthermore the settlers of Windsor Forest being so dependent on Government for the maintenance of their productive environment were in an even more extreme situation than other rice farmers. This is an issue to which I shall be returning later and at the moment I mainly wish to draw attention to this clearly expressed caution about economic ambitiousness.

Huggins gives us the reasons that the farmers advanced for their desire to keep to small scale farming:

"Those who hold this view argue that whatever income is made by a small business all comes into the home, that the less outside help to be paid - and watched - the better. They support this by pointing out that the large landowner plants little or no rice but finds it preferable to let this land to small tenants, and this is suggested as added proof that under existing circumstances there is a point beyond which it is not expedient to increase the farm unit."

(ibid p.30)

Huggins accepts the logic of this argument but insists that "...the average farmer, at Windsor Forest especially, has not reached that point" and therefore "the size of his business should be expanded further" (ibid p. 30). Whilst this was probably true, what is most striking is that these same arguments, particularly the one about the problems of supervising hired labour, were the very ones that were frequently advanced to me in the same village 35 years later to explain why farmers were unwilling to expand the level of their economic activity. We must also remember that the farmers who spoke to me were talking about a situation of mechanised cultivation where the number of employees involved would have been considerably less than in the more labour-intensive practices of the 1930s.

The system of production about which Huggins wrote is basically the one which became established in the 1920s and by the 1930s was in the form in which it remained until the 1950s. It essentially consisted of the cash-crop production of rice by small autonomous family farm units for sale to large merchants who in turn sold it elsewhere in the country or exported it to the West Indian islands. The techniques of production used in the 1930s and described to me by informants are essentially the same as those found by Smith in 1956 (R.T.Smith 1957).

Because of the good drainage and irrigation facilities in Windsor

Forest and La Jalousie it has always been possible to plant two crops per year, which only a minority of the country's farmers are able to do. As Huggins reports:

"The farmer cultivates approximately the entire rice acreage under his control for the Autumn or 'big' crop and about 90 per cent in the Spring or 'small' crop. The indication is that most of the land is being worked severely and only in rare instances escapes two crops yearly."

(ibid p. 29)

The types of padi planted were several and although there had been a strong emphasis from the earliest times on the need for pure line seed to be used it is doubtful if farmers stuck rigidly to this. The normal practice was for farmers to keep back several bags of padi from a crop to be used as seed for the next one, and farmers would continue to do this until the quality of the seed manifestly deteriorated. Then he would obtain a replacement amount, either 'pure line' seed from the Government's Rice Station, or more likely merely from a neighbour.

Thus although farmers would talk about planting a named variety such as 'Lajia' or 'BG79' or 'D110' which were the most common varieties grown in Guyana it is doubtful if many of them did in fact grow pure strains of these seeds, and the actual harvest was more likely to contain a mixture of these varieties. The varieties named above are all of the Indica type of padi, with long grains and so suffer the disadvantages of this type. They are tall growing with a tendency to 'lodge' or lie flat on the field as a result of heavy rain or high winds. They are also leafy, which hinders ripening and threshing, and do not respond well to fertilisers (Smith 1957:512; Grist 1953:63).

There have been experiments conducted on the fertilisation of rice in Guyana for many years: experiments which have always tended to produce disappointing results. The general conclusion was that while fertilisers would indeed increase yields they did not do so substantially, thus making their general use uneconomic. One of the problems with the Guyanese varieties was that with the application of fertilisers too much of the additional growth went into the stems and leaves of the plants, rather than into the grain. This made them even more spindly and prone to lodging, leading to them being known disparagingly as 'Guyana grasses'.

The other great problem area as far as the traditional varieties were concerned was the growing period. They are what is known as 'season bound' varieties, in that the stages of the maturation of the plant are determined by the climatic characteristics of the environment in which it is growing, particularly the amount of daylight. Thus the growing period of the plant is affected by the seasons, in the case of Guyana these being wet and dry, with two forms of each season each year. As was mentioned in the previous chapter there is a long rainy season from mid-April to mid-August and a small rainy season from mid-November to mid-February, with dry seasons in between. The padi is planted at the onset of the wet season and grows during this. With the arrival of dry weather and longer periods of sunshine the plants begin to ripen and are finally ready for harvesting in the middle of the dry season. This leaves the remainder of the dry season for the padi to be dried in the mill before milling into rice. However this timetable is a tight one and depends on the seasons being reliable, which they are not. Thus there is considerable variation between years and farmers continually face reversals of fortune because of the weather.

With the traditional varieties the extent of the plant's growth is determined by the length of the wet season, for with the coming of the sunny weather the flowering begins. If the season is too short the grain will not have had time to grow fully before ripening and so the harvest will be small, whilst if the season is too long the grain will have reached full maturity and then deteriorate before ripening. Also the plant will grow taller and so increase the chances of lodging and rotting. Since the two wet seasons in Guyana are of different lengths it is therefore not surprising that this is reflected in the size of the harvest, with the longer one being the Big Crop and the shorter one the Small Crop.

Most Guyanese rice farmers have always planted the Big Crop but only a minority have planted a Small Crop (although in some villages a 'catch crop' of seed dropped from the main crop and self-germinating in the field is harvested). Usually the reasons for the failure to plant a second crop are to do with the unreliability of the water supply, for when farmers are largely dependent on rainfall for their water the short wet season is a risky source since it is so variable.

After the harvest the stubble was burnt off and the land fallowed with cattle feeding on any grass that came up. To start the new crop the land was ploughed 'in the dry' (when the land was still dry and firm after the harvest) with a pair of oxen and the traditional single bladed plough, which allowed the deeper soil to dry out. When the rains came the land was ploughed again and harrowed or raked to make a smooth slurry of mud in which the padi could grow. At the same time a separate seed bed was prepared on the edge of the main plot and sown with selected seed. Huggins quotes farmers as using 65-70 lbs of seed

per acre (Huggins 1941:30), which he says is twice the recommended amount. Nevertheless Smith quotes farmers as using 100 lbs of seed per acre in 1950 (R.T.Smith 1957:513).

Once the plants in the seedbed had developed sufficiently they would be transplanted into the main plot. This was back-breaking work usually done by the women and children and entailed pushing the plants deep into the mud with only the healthiest plants being chosen. This method ensured the highest yield from the crop but was also the most arduous and time consuming.

The padi would then grow in the flooded field and would require relatively little attention apart from checks on the level of water, the maintenance of the bund walls separating the plots and weeding. Under the traditional system there was little that could be done about pest and disease infestation since the chemical means of rectification simply did not exist.

Once the harvest approached the field would be drained and the padi allowed to ripen from green to golden yellow. Traditionally the padi was cut by hand using a curved grass knife, which was the most demanding of all the cultivation activities, with additional labour usually being needed. The whole family would be involved and usually several families would join together to reap each other's crop reciprocally, as commonly happens in peasant agricultural systems. As was usual in sugar estates each person was allocated a 'task' of $1/8$ of a Rhymland acre or 3×12 Rhymland rods (this equals 614.16 sq yards; 1 sq rod = 17.08 sq yards).

The cut padi was bound into bundles which were in turn carried to the edge of the plot on a sled pulled by bulls. There a smooth threshing space or kharian had been prepared. Several hand threshing systems are possible with rice, but the one that was universally used in Guyana was that of 'bull mashing'. In the midst of the smoothed circle of bare earth that constituted the kharian a post was erected and a team of two to four bulls harnessed to this in parallel. The padi was heaped onto the kharian and the bulls were driven round and round the post, trampling on the padi and knocking the grains off the stalks. At the same time the farmer and his helpers forked through the straw to prevent it getting too compacted. Periodically the straw would be removed to the edge of the kharian and new padi added. Also the grains on the floor would be collected together from time to time. Although this looks very rough and ready it is apparently an efficient method of threshing and compares well with more mechanised methods. It is also used widely in many other countries.

After threshing the padi would be briefly winnowed by tossing it in the air to let the perennial breeze remove the chaff and then put into bags. These would be transported to the mill in flat bottomed punt-like boats which were common, or on carts if access to the field was good. Both means of transportation would be pulled by bulls, with the boats using the irrigation trenches and the carts the dam-heads. Both forms were provided by the millers as part of their service to those farmers using their mills, although they would charge for them.

MILLING

Huggins reports fourteen mills in the Windsor Forest area in 1938 (Huggins 1941: fig 7), whilst Smith found nine in 1956 (R.T.Smith 1957:510). The traditional system of production entailed the 'parboiling' of the padi to enable it to be turned into 'brown' rice. Brown rice is more nutritious than white rice, although it is less prestigious and has always sold at a lower price than the latter. It is the main form of rice eaten by the majority of the Caribbean population, though currently the market is changing, as we shall see later. This process takes place at the mill, but milling has long been the weak link in the Guyanese rice industry with poor standards and dubious practices which have frequently been criticised. This has meant that the millers have been held responsible for the periodic criticism of the quality of Guyanese rice shipped to the Caribbean islands.

In 1939 Mr.H. Parker was brought down from Malaya to advise on milling in Guyana and had some very harsh things to say about what he saw:

"The mills visited were found to be in a very bad state, badly ventilated, infested with rice and paddy weevil, lacking in storage and drying space; in fact to put it bluntly, there are only one or two worth calling mills. They are mostly a tin shed, and one or two Engleberg Hullers (which are about 20 years behind the times) and a drying field."

(Report on Rice Milling in British Guiana, Legislative Council Paper No.17027, 1939, at para 4)

This is a fair description not only of what Huggins described for 1938, but also of what Smith found in 1956 and of what I saw in 1972.

Parker laid the blame for this situation on the small scale of the milling enterprises with their simple low-level equipment and their

inability to pay encouraging prices to farmers (ibid at para 5). This situation must have been particularly bad at Windsor Forest which had, as was mentioned above, one of the greatest concentrations of mills in the whole country at this time. This is indeed born out by Huggins's statement that millers actually competed with each other for farmers' custom:

"There is in the area a relatively large number of mills (22 from Vreede en Hoop to Hague) with keen competition, especially in the Windsor Forest section, for the handling of the growers' crop. In consequence a farmer who is regarded as reliable has little difficulty in obtaining credit for crop production. So freely is credit provided that it is general practice throughout the area for the miller to make crop loans, free of interest, provided he is guaranteed the grower's milling business."

(Huggins 1941 p. 31)

This is an unusual situation and in the face of such fierce competition it must have been difficult for millers to improve their equipment. This is a problem to which we shall be returning.

Once in the rice 'factory' or mill the farmer's padi would have been stored in bond until it could be soaked. The process entailed soaking the padi in large tanks, usually of concrete, for 36 to 48 hours and then passing steam through it. This was achieved by draining the tank and emptying the padi into drums which were connected to a boiler producing steam. The steam entered the bottom of the drum and once it had reached the top the padi had been parboiled and turned into the basis for brown rice. Parboiling has the effect of hardening the grain, an advantage in view of the unsophisticated mills, and also driving some of the nutrients from the bran layer into the grain, thus increasing its nutritional value (Grist 1953:245).

Once the padi had been parboiled it was spread out on the drying floor - initially a yard and later a concrete area - to be dried by the sun. This usually took two days, with the padi being periodically 'kicked' by people walking through it to rotate it and ensure even drying. At night it would be gathered under portable shelters to protect it from rain and dew. Once dry it would be bagged and again stored in the bond until it was time for it to be milled.

There are a number of different approaches to the construction of mills, both in terms of the processes involved and in the scale of the operations. The Guyanese rice industry had by now evolved a structure that entailed a large number of small mills, and as we have seen, Mr. Parker did not like what he saw of this system. As he further explained:

"All the mills in British Guiana have Engleberg Hullers and this method is known as the American Method, because it was first introduced in that country. Here the paddy is milled (and to a great extent broken) between a rapidly revolving curved and ribbed iron cylinder and an adjustable steel knife plate surrounded by a perforated sheet metal cover or part of a cover. The attrition so produced removes not only the husk but also the cuticle from the grain, while the perforations or slots in the sheet metal cover allow the broken husk, dust meal and small particles of broken rice to escape. Underneath the revolving iron cylinder there is a larger revolving wooden drum to which strips of leather are fixed. This drum is also surrounded by a curved steel screen, with slotted perforations. The rice from the upper part of the machine is polished by being beaten by leather strips, while here again the light meal and dust pass through the screen."

(ibid at para 8)

The system is simple and has many attractions for the small miller, but it also had a number of drawbacks as far as quality and quantity of output were concerned. Here again Mr. Parker had some harsh things to say about what he saw:

" The system employed throughout British Guiana is only suitable for milling relatively small quantities of rice. It is inexpensive and simple to install but the power required is excessive in relation to the output obtained. Moreover it is wasteful as regards by-products, because adequate means are not provided for separating the smaller broken rice and valuable by-products inevitably produced. The product of these machines, however, as at present installed and operated in British Guiana, will never satisfactorily compete with Burma rice."

(ibid)

Parker's comments in 1939 are interesting and relevant since the Engleberg Huller has remained the main machine in use till the present time and even in the mid 1970s still represented the machine used in more than half the mills in the country. In the area of Windsor Forest six of the eight mills were so equipped in 1972.

Parker's recommendation was that large central mills should be established and this was done in a number of places, though without conspicuous success. This means that until the arrival of the smaller Japanese multi-stage mills capable of producing white rice efficiently the old Engleberg Huller continued to dominate the Guyanese milling industry, with all the disadvantages and limitations that Parker had so clearly pointed out. This undesirable situation was often seen as the Achilles heel of the rice industry and much concern was expressed about it in numerous reports. These made several recommendations and several plans for phasing out the Engleberg were drawn up, but none were implemented, and the Engleberg ground on.

After milling the rice would then be sold by the farmer, usually a merchant in Georgetown by whom it would be sold in the country or exported. Guyana had been self-sufficient in rice since 1918 and increasingly the export of rice had become more important. However

during the inter-war years, and especially from 1936-40, the industry was depressed, with a low level of exports (Mandle 1973:77). The Rice Marketing Board had been established under the Rice (Export Trade) Ordinance of 1932, but initially only graded rice and fixed export prices. This system did not work well and a Committee was set up to investigate the situation in 1933 and found that:

"By divers evil devices it is possible for the exporter to agree to give rebates in various forms to the purchaser, and this results in exported rice being sold at prices lower than those fixed by the Board. As the Committee is of the opinion that the R.M.B. in its present form does not serve the purpose of effectively controlling the price of rice exported by reason of the secret rebates, the Board should cease to continue."

(Report of the Select Committee to Report on the Question of the Rice Industry in Regard to the Exportation of Rice, Legislative Council Paper No. 16049, 1933, at paras 9 & 10, CO 114/215)

However the situation was not finally remedied until the Rice Marketing Board was re-constituted in a much more powerful form with the beginning of World War II.

THE FARM ENTERPRISE

If milling operations were found to be on a small scale, so also were the farming operations. Reference has already been made to the fact that Huggins found the average size of a rice farm in the Windsor Forest area was 4.39 acres (though this appears to have been brought down by the small size of the Hague farms which were included with those of Windsor Forest). However even in Vreed en Hoop the average size was only 6.66 acres (Huggins 1941:29). Furthermore the latter also had a capital outlay that was 35.6% higher than that of Windsor Forest, although Huggins points out that this was largely due to the higher investment in livestock to cater for the Georgetown milk market.

What shows through consistently in both areas is that the investment in productive resources in the form of such items as tools, equipment, boats etc, is very low both in terms of proportion of the total investment (30% in each case), and in total value (\$9 and \$14). This illustrates very clearly that after his land the most important resource that the farmer had were his bulls, included in Huggins's general 'livestock' heading. He found that 70% of Windsor Forest farmers had oxen (ibid:29), and charted a clear relationship between the number of oxen a farmer has and the acreage he can cultivate:

"The number of oxen which a farmer has at his disposal has a very definite influence on his acreage. Since it has been shown that the size of the farm is one of the most important factors controlling the profits made, it is clear that the provision of working oxen is a major consideration in farm organisation."

(ibid p. 32)

As was mentioned above, a pasture had been established in the 'savannah' in 1927 (Report of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines, 1927, at para 51, CO 114/204). This consisted of 296.675 acres of Windsor Forest land and 232.421 acres of La Jalousie land, giving approximately 530 acres in all (ibid). This was in addition to the substantial pasture near the front of Windsor Forest, which was reserved for milk cows whilst the savannah pasture was for bulls. This meant that when being used for rice work the bulls had to be brought from the back, a distance of 3-4 miles, early in the morning. When not being used for crop work they tended to be left to their own devices, with only an occasional check that they were still all right.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The picture of Windsor Forest that emerges from this examination of the traditional system of production characteristic of the inter-war years is one of a community devoted to rice cultivation for commercial sale, but hampered by a number of structural factors from making very much profit. The 'prosperity' that Huggins reported appears to have been largely due to the favourable drainage and irrigation system which the leasehold arrangement had bequeathed the settlers and which enabled them to produce two good crops per year. Of particular note are:

- 1) The land was cultivated on the basis of the family farm. The peasant-farming system relied heavily on the use of unpaid family labour for many of the crucial stages of cultivation, such as transplanting and harvesting. For large parts of the year the land could be maintained by the farmer himself, but at times there would not be enough work involved to keep even him occupied.
- 2) During periods of inactivity the farmer would obtain outside work on a casual basis to supplement his farm income, (as noted above Huggins found only 60% of farm income came from rice, with 15% from outside work). This is a characteristic pattern of Guyanese agriculture which dates back to the days of earliest emancipation, whereby the sugar estates would lay off labourers in the slack seasons and leave them to survive as best they could. So just as the estate workers were forced to supplement their income with outside work, so were the rice farmers of Windsor Forest. The opportunities for this would

not be very great and the most likely sources would be neighbouring sugar estates and public works projects such as the maintainance of the sea defences, road building and trench cleaning.

- 3) The settlers of Windsor Forest had successfully exploited the advantages that the leasehold system offered them and had expanded their rice cultivation as far as they could. This is indicated by the fact that the Reports of the Lands & Mines Department show that all the land at Windsor Forest and La Jalousie was fully taken up at this time, and by the fact that the extensive savannah pasture had to be opened up to accommodate the bulls of the farmers (for as Huggins pointed out these were key determinants of a farmer's scale of operation). This specialisation was in turn complemented by the density of mills found in the area. These appear to have grown to such an extent that the millers were in the unusual situation of having such excess capacity that they had to compete amongst each other for farmers' custom.
- 4) However, as Parker pointed out, the mills were of simple design, low quality and under capitalised. This would tend to indicate that there were relatively few investment opportunities in the rural area and that milling offered one of the few available. Unfortunately we do not have details of who the millers were (apart from the very early ones of Boodhoo and Fung-ke-Fung) and so it is not possible to discover what brought them into this activity. However from what I could gather from informants in the village I have the

impression that they were ex-rice farmers who had been successful enough in the early days of the scheme to make enough money for the capital investment involved. Under such circumstances a movement from cultivation to milling would be a logical step, and still be within the area of farmers' expertise. It is in contrast to the investment opportunities mentioned by Smith for 1956 (1964: 324) and the even more different ones I found. This estimated progression from local rice farming to milling would also be consistent with the over-capacity mentioned by Huggins, as farmers would probably lack wider investment opportunities.

- 5) However this investment climate and the 'prosperity' of the area must be seen against the background of appalling poverty and depression that existed throughout the rest of the country and the West Indies as a whole and which was so graphically revealed by the Moyne Commission (Cmd 6607, 1945). The benefits enjoyed by the area belie a low absolute level of investment and income, as Huggins showed. The rice farmers in particular were disadvantaged by the inability of Guyanese rice to compete effectively with the importation of higher quality rice from the Far East, particularly Burma, as Parker noted in his report on milling. With the expensive sea defences and drainage problems that Guyana faced it is doubtful if its rice could compete on price grounds with that from the great producers of the East. When the problems of the poor quality of Guyanese rice resulting from inefficient milling are added and combined with the fact that the industry was selling to a very impoverished market in the West Indies,

it is not so surprising that exporters had to resort to "divers evil devices" to be able to undercut the imports from the East and so secure themselves a market. As will be discussed later, the Guyanese rice industry has only been healthy when the competition from Far Eastern imports has been removed, and the basis for the post-war growth of the industry was largely determined by the final removal of this threat.

All this added to the pattern of low investment and low income that has been revealed, with the exporters offering low prices for the farmers' rice because of its poor quality, and the millers unable to invest in better equipment to remedy the situation because of their over-capacity and low income. Thus the relative advantage that Windsor Forest farmers enjoyed over others in less well drained areas only served to maintain them in a state of stagnation that needed major structural changes to alter. These did come eventually in the form of the Second World War and the cessation of imports from the East into the West Indian market.

The changes that moved the Guyanese rice industry out of the depression of the 1930s were largely to do with marketing rather than production and the expansion that took place in the 1940s in particular was based on the traditional system of production. Indeed this survived into the major expansion of the post-war era and was the basis of cultivation described by Smith in 1956 (1957).

This Chapter has described the characteristics of the traditional system of production that developed once the Land Settlement Scheme had become established and the estate fully converted to rice

production. This system represents the attempts by Indian peasants to be independent producers, utilising the resources of the family for the majority of farming tasks and the community for the larger ones like harvesting. Nevertheless, as was forcefully pointed out to Huggins, although they might be cash-crop farmers, they did not always exhibit the characteristics to be expected of entrepreneurs. Thus they were prepared to limit the size of their farming activity to a scale which they felt was appropriate, but which obviously did not accord with the view of Huggins the economist, as he makes very clear.

In addition to the restrictions on expansion that appear to have originated, according to Huggins, in the economic view of the farmers, the latter were also constrained by the wider economic system. Thus the economy of the Caribbean as a whole was very depressed at this time and the organisation of the rice trade, both for the internal and export markets, was in a poor state. In such an environment one would perhaps expect farmers to be cautious about expanding their economic activities. This situation changed with the coming of the Second World War, as we shall see in Chapter 5, and then the farmers showed themselves willing to respond to economic stimuli. However, I now intend to leave the matter of the development of rice farming in the village and turn to the more general social characteristics of the residents, both in 1956 and 1972.

CHAPTER FOUR

WINDSOR FOREST IN 1956 AND 1972

- Introduction
- The 1956 Study
- Physical Layout and Amenities
- Population
- The Household
- Kinship
- Marriage
- Domestic Life
- The Household Economy
- Education
- Religion
 - Hindus
 - Muslims
 - Christians
- Administration
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- Summary and Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

Having examined the formative years of Windsor Forest I now propose to turn to wider aspects of the community. As was mentioned in the Introduction, the village had been studied in 1956 and this Chapter will examine the picture of the situation in the 1950s presented by Smith, and review the changes between then and the time of my fieldwork in 1972. The 1950s and 1960s were a time of hope and progress for the Indians of Guyana, resulting in noticable improvements in the facilities available to the village, which has in turn added to the living standards of the inhabitants. On the other hand it is necessary to consider the extent to which the residents felt that the improvements were of the scale and frequency that they had expected. Thus the differences between 1956 and 1972 mark some of the most significant evidence for the processes of economic and social change in the community and provide a background to much of the later discussion.

THE 1956 STUDY

In 1956 the village of Windsor Forest was studied by R.T. Smith who was resident in the community for nine months. This research has been written up in a number of places (R.T. Smith 1957, 1964 ; R.T. Smith & Jayawardena 1958, 1959) and combined with the work of his close colleague, C. Jayawardena, forms the bedrock of modern anthropological studies of the East Indian population of Guyana.

Smith found a community which was predominantly East Indian and engaged overwhelmingly in rice farming. There was also a sizeable Afro-Guyanese element in the village and a number of Chinese too. Although some Chinese cultivated rice, few Africans did, preferring to

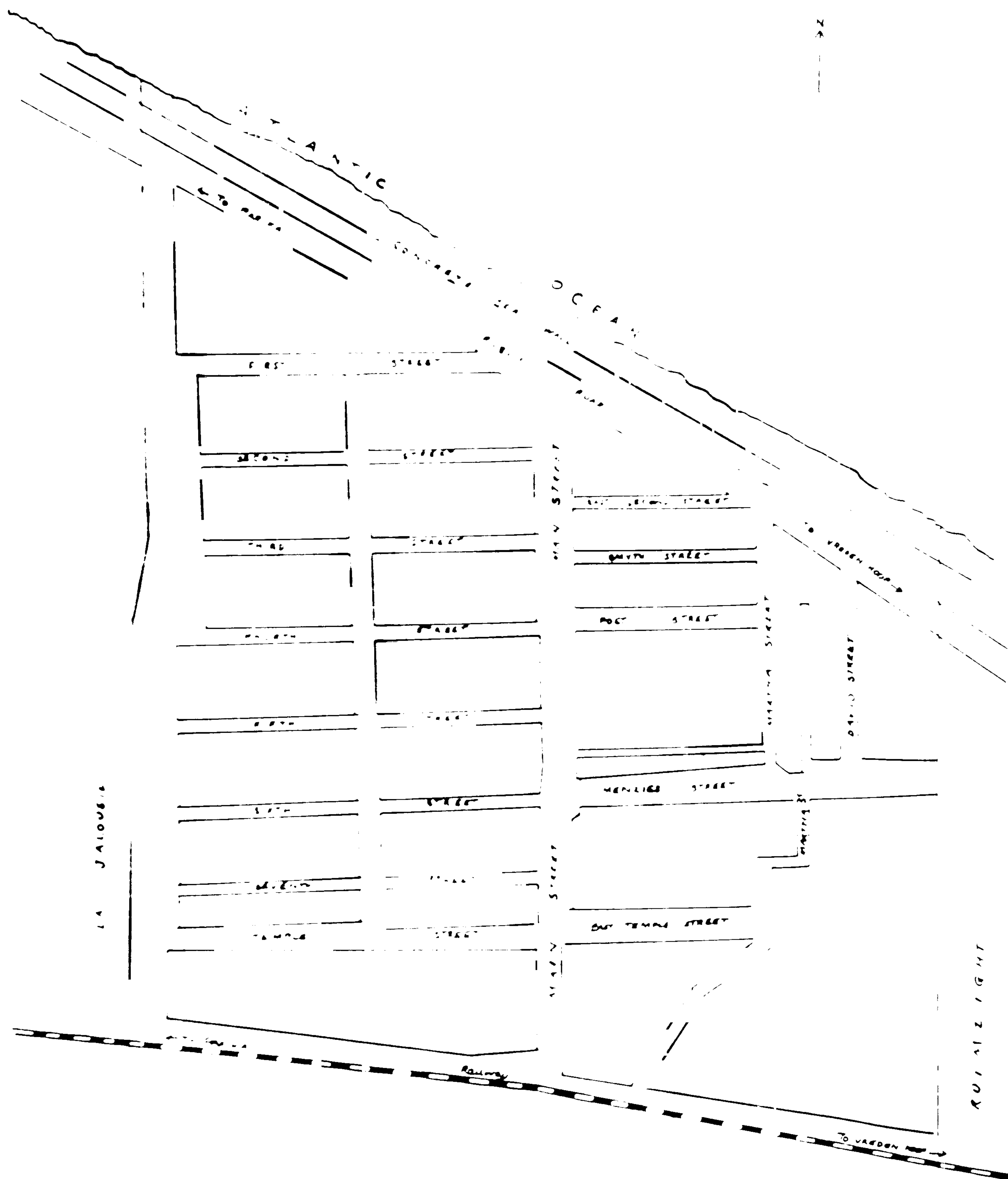
work in paid employment on the nearby estates.

The techniques of cultivation were very little different to those described by Huggins for the 1950s, though now the village had received the benefit of the protected West Indian market for Guyanese rice that had existed since the Second World War. As a result of this there had been an increase in the acreage under cultivation and the rising prices being paid to farmers had raised the standard of living of rice farmers from the depressed times before the War.

In addition there had been other changes nationally, such as the move to internal self-government, though at the time of the study the country was only just re-starting the move to this after the débacle of Cheddi Jagan's first administration in 1953 (Jagan 1972, R.T. Smith 1961). This meant that the Peoples Progressive Party (P.P.P.), as the 'Indian' party, was once again in power and Jagan Prime Minister. This combination of rising economic fortunes and awakening political awareness gave a buoyant mood to East Indian communities like Windsor Forest, and Smith found it alive with excited factionalism and status competition (1964:323).

There had long been some animosity between Indians and Africans in Guyana and the Indians were perceived as a 'threat' by Africans, though there is evidence to suggest that this was fomented by the planter class in the past for their own interest (Bartels 1977). Nevertheless in local communities like Windsor Forest the two racial groups tended to get on with reasonable amity, though there was very little mixing across boundaries in matters such as marriage and religion.

WINDSOR FOREST



The main problem facing the community as Smith saw it was that the dependence on rice would soon prove restrictive, in that the village was now almost at the limit of the land that could conveniently be put to rice cultivation and with a growing population there would soon be excessive pressure on resources. The need was for a more profitable crop, but none appeared to be in sight. However events were to prove that the main problems facing the village lay in another direction, as did the attempts at their solution.

PHYSICAL LAYOUT AND AMENITIES

In 1972 Windsor Forest had basically the same characteristics as it had in 1956, though it was now bigger and there were some improvements in the facilities available to the residents. The layout of the village still conformed to that dictated by its history as a sugar estate and by the general requirements of drainage and irrigation on the coastland (see Map 5). This meant that the eastern section retained the irregular street pattern of the old estate community, with one named after the last manager, Mr. Menzies, whilst on the other hand the western section exhibited the gridiron pattern created by the Lands & Mines surveyors. This contrast carried over to the names of the streets too, with the older ones being named after people (though now it was not known who these people were), whilst the newer section was merely numbered, giving such impersonal addresses as 'Seventh Street'.

The population had grown by 21% in the intervening years, and that meant that more houses were needed. In 1956 there had been 340, whereas now there were 380 sited on the 397 houselots available (an occupancy rate of 96%, although some of the larger house lots could

have been subdivided). The quality of the houses had also improved, with the traditional 'troolie' or 'trash' house of wattle and daub and a roof of palm fronds having almost disappeared. There was only one in the village and it was reputed to be the last remaining one in the whole district; soon after I left the field the old couple who lived in it died and it was broken down. Also gone were the 'logies' or ranges which were the traditional accomodation provided by sugar estates and consisted of a long row of rooms in which individual families lived. Windsor Forest had had a large two storey structure remaining from the estate time, and this had provided most of the accommodation for the African population. However it had burned down some years previously in circumstances that will be discussed later.

All the remaining houses were of wood and built in a range of distinctively Guyanese styles. These varied from small cabins only just raised off the ground, to large structures with several rooms and a walled-in ground floor or 'bottom house'. The small cabins often consisted of one room with perhaps a kitchen extension and tended to have shutters to cover the windows instead of glass, whilst some of the oldest ones were walled in wooden shingles.

More commonly the houses consisted of a main public room taking up approximately half of the floor plan of the house, with one or two bedrooms going off this and a kitchen projecting at the rear or as a separate structure joined to the house. A common variant was to have a long gallery running along the front of the house with windows of fancy glass along its length, thus making the main room 'L-shaped'. All of these rooms were frequently raised off the ground on concrete

pillars to a height of 7-8 feet to give the houses a distinctively Guyanese appearance. In these cases the upstairs would be reached by an external stair with a porch at the main door, whilst at the rear there would be a less grand back stair from the kitchen. Although it was by now usual to build houses in this style from the start, there were a number of structures that had started off on the ground and had been raised up when the money became available.

The ground floor, or 'bottom house' was often left bare and could be used for many purposes ranging from parking tractors and storing padi to a site for religious ceremonies and a pleasantly cool place in which to sling a hammock of sugar bags in which to rest in the heat of the day. As finances improved it might have become possible to cover the floor with concrete, which would allow it to be used as a more elegant place to entertain visitors, especially if benches were provided. These improvements would also make it a more satisfactory venue for religious functions. In addition part or all of this bottom area could then be walled in with concrete blocks to make a more secure store or an additional sleeping room.

The streets themselves continued to be unmetalled, with packed mud being the main surface. Main Street, because it was a public road to the railway station, was periodically made up with sand and had its surface graded, but most other streets received only occasional attention and there were frequent complaints about the condition of them. They were at their worst in the rainy season when many of them became quagmires and almost impassable even on foot. One frequent and justified cause for complaint was the way that tractors being taken back to houses broke up the surface of the road and completely ruined

it in the wet weather. Some streets were fortunate enough to have been re-made with 'quarry cleanings' of sand and rock by the Local Authority, which made a big improvement. The whole issue was deeply bound up with the political struggles going on in the community and will be discussed further in Chapter 7. Thus although there had been some improvement in the quality of access to their houses, the villagers nevertheless felt it still remained poor and repeatedly demanded the kind of well made tarmac roads provided by the sugar estates.

Although the roads within the village gave problems, the public road linking Windsor Forest with the rest of the country had greatly improved. Like almost all coastal Guyanese villages Windsor Forest was built close to the sea wall and access was by means of the coastal road running just behind the sea wall. The maintenance of this had always been the responsibility of the estates fronting onto it and it had traditionally been paved with 'burnt earth' or baked clay which looked much like red cinders. However this was only a palliative since the rains soon washed it away and the rutted base of clay reappeared.

However, the Peoples National Congress (P.N.C.) government that came to power in 1964 had pledged much of its development effort to 'infrastructural' works such as roads and in the late 1960s the section of the road past Windsor Forest was correctly made up and tarmacked. This meant that there was now a good quality road all the way to the ferry terminal at Vreed en Hoop some seven miles to the east. The new road stopped a few miles to the west of Windsor Forest, but work continued on it and by 1973 it ran to the ferry terminal at

Parika on the mouth of the Essequibo and for the first time there was a good motor road linking all the main coastal settlements in the country, with the exception of the the relatively under privileged county of Essequibo which still had to survive with dirt roads. All this was in sharp contrast to the situation in the early 1960s when the only tarmac roads in the country were in Georgetown, ending abruptly once one left the city (R.T. Smith 1962:74).

The public road running at the front of the village balanced the form of transportation running at the rear of the village: the railway. This, combined with the East Coast Demerara railway, constituted what was claimed to be the oldest railway on the mainland of South America. The West Coast railway ran from Vreed en Hoop, where the ferries from Georgetown disembarked, to Parika at the mouth of the Essequibo where the ferries left for the Essequibo coastlands beyond the river's huge estuary. Parika was also the terminus for the ferries that sailed up the Essequibo to Bartica and so into the part of the hinterland that had traditionally provided most of the valuable gold and diamonds that had continually attracted prospectors from the coast.

The railway itself was a narrow gauge line with rolling stock of spectacular age which trundled along at the rate of a brisk trot. It had been the main form of public transport for a very long time and like the even older East Coast line had served to tie the country together. However with the development of improved roads it was increasingly difficult to match the speed, comfort and convenience of buses and taxis as a mode of transport. It was neglected, declined substantially and was scheduled for closure in 1974, to be replaced by a Government bus service on the new public road.

Both the road and the railway terminated at Vreed en Hoop at the mouth of the Demerara River across from Georgetown. From there it was necessary to catch a ferry across the river to the city itself. By the 1970s there was a large purpose-built boat performing this function, with a capacity for approximately 20 cars and several hundred passengers on an upper deck. It was supplemented by a motorised pontoon for cars only. The ferries were every hour and a half, although vehicles had to queue for a considerable time to get on one, with an hour's wait being normal in the day and twice that in the rush hours in the morning and evening. Even ordinary passengers were not sure of getting on, since at rush hours there were large numbers of people travelling to and from work in Georgetown. For many years there had been talk of bridging the river, but this would have been very expensive, because at the crossing point it was more than half a mile wide. However in 1977 a road crossing was provided further upstream by a relatively inexpensive pontoon bridge that incorporated a movable central section to allow ships to pass. The ferry boat was then allocated to other duties elsewhere. In the days of the ferry it took approximately an hour to an hour and a half to travel to Georgetown; it should now take somewhat less time.

The other important amenity that the village had acquired since 1950 was the provision of electricity which came in 1968 as part of the Government's infrastructural development, although it had been planned for a long time. The vast majority (73%) of households in the village are now connected to the system and although there are complaints over the cost, there is universal acceptance that it represents a very great improvement over previous systems. However the provision does not as yet extend to street lights, though these,

along with the paved streets, are among what is most envied about the facilities of the sugar estates. There was talk, and hope, that the Local Authority might be able to bring these, even though the cost would be high.

Windsor Forest has had a school since estate times. Initially it was run by the Canadian Mission, but closed in the 1920s as the Mission conceded dominance to the Anglicans who had by then had also established a school in the village. Nominally the school is still a church school, and although in 1961 all such schools were brought under the control of the Ministry of Education, a good deal of responsibility is still held by the Church through the Board of Managers. The school is contained in two buildings and is of the largest category, having some 1,100 pupils and some 30 teachers in addition to Pupil Teachers. It takes children from 5 to 15, thus covering both Primary and Secondary ranges. The Secondary section is only classed as a Junior Secondary, which means that the highest examinations that are taken are those set by the College of Preceptors, a British based organisation setting more practically oriented rather than academic examinations. On the other hand children who it is felt would benefit from a more academic education can enter for the Common Entrance examination which offers entry to the Government Secondary schools which are situated some five and seven miles either side of Windsor Forest. The most able can compete for scholarships to the most prestigious Government secondary schools in Georgetown which recruit from all over the country. In addition there are a number of private secondary schools offering an academic education leading to G.C.E. in Georgetown, and there are 88 pupils attending these from Windsor Forest.

The village was also provided with a health clinic in the early 1960s but with the civil disturbances that occurred soon after this it became vandalised and unusable. In the following years there were many complaints by the villager about the fact that their health centre had not been restored, whereas many other such buildings had been restored elsewhere. The point was not lost that most of these were in areas which supported the PNC government, which Windsor Forest did not. The Government response had always been that since the building had been destroyed by local people they should contribute to its restoration. This was the point on which most of the contention took place, but eventually the matter was resolved, the centre was renovated and opened on the day before I left the field. The background to this will be examined in more detail later.

POPULATION

However the greatest change between 1956 and 1972 was in the size and composition of the village population. Reference has already been made to the fact that the total population rose by some 21.2%. However the East Indian population rose by 37.8% over the same period and it is the dominance of the East Indians that is now the most noticable characteristic of the village population. In 1956 Smith found a population of 2,350 with approximately 250 Africans and 60 Chinese. The 1960 Census shows a similar pattern.

TABLE 4/1

ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF WINDSOR FOREST - 1972

Age	Indians				Africans				Chinese				Other				TOTAL	
	Males N	%	N	%	Males N	%	N	%	Males N	%	N	%	Males N	%	N	%	N	%
0-4	197	14.0	171	12.6	-	-	1	20.0	3	13.0	2	11.1	4	25.0	5	50.0	383	13.5
5-9	218	15.4	201	14.8	-	-	-	-	2	8.7	4	22.2	3	18.7	2	20.0	430	15.1
10-14	230	16.3	200	14.9	-	-	-	-	1	4.3	5	27.8	-	-	-	-	436	15.3
15-19	174	12.3	194	-	-	-	-	-	5	21.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	373	13.1
20-24	130	9.2	140	10.3	1	25.0	-	-	2	8.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	273	9.6
25-29	94	6.7	84	6.2	-	-	1	20.0	1	4.3	1	5.6	1	6.3	1	10.0	183	6.6
30-34	58	4.1	76	5.6	1	25.0	-	-	1	4.3	1	5.6	2	12.5	-	-	137	4.9
35-39	69	4.9	53	4.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	12.5	-	-	125	4.4
40-44	56	4.0	44	3.2	-	-	-	-	1	4.3	1	5.6	1	6.3	-	-	103	3.6
45-49	34	2.4	49	3.6	-	-	-	-	2	8.7	-	-	-	-	1	10.0	86	3.0
50-54	35	2.5	44	3.2	-	-	-	-	1	4.3	1	5.6	-	-	-	-	81	2.8
55-59	46	3.3	35	2.6	-	-	2	40.0	1	4.3	1	5.6	1	6.3	-	-	86	3.0
60-64	22	1.6	25	1.8	-	-	-	-	1	4.3	-	-	-	-	1	10.0	57	1.7
65-69	21	1.5	27	2.0	2	50.0	-	-	-	-	1	5.6	-	-	-	-	51	1.8
70-74	19	1.3	12	0.9	-	-	-	-	1	4.3	1	5.6	1	6.3	-	-	34	1.2
75-79	6	0.4	2	0.1	-	-	1	20.0	1	4.3	-	-	1	6.3	-	-	11	0.4
80 +	3	0.2	2	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	0.2
TOTAL	1412	100.0	1360	100.0	4	100.0	5	100.0	23	100.0	18	100.0	16	100.0	10	100.0	2848	100.0
OVERALL	49.6		47.8		0.1		0.2		0.8		0.6		0.6		0.4		100.0	
	2772	97.3			9	0.3			41	1.4			26	1.0			2848	100.0

The most striking thing about the 1972 situation is the almost complete disappearance of the African population, leaving the village 97.3% East Indian.

The reason for the departure of the Africans lies in the disturbances of the mid 1960s when the 'destabilisation' of the Jagan government with the assistance of external sources was accompanied by a good deal of violence and racial antagonism (Jagan 1966, Glasgow 1970, Simms 1966). There had long been a certain amount of inter-communal tension in Guyana, but with the movement of politics in the early 1960s it became increasingly rapidly polarised, with the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) of Chedi Jagan being the 'Indian' party, and the Peoples National Congress (PNC) of Forbes Burnham being the 'African' party. The tensions erupted in a series of strikes and disturbances which entailed the bringing in of British troops in 1962-3. Throughout this period 176 people were killed and much property, including a large part of the main shopping area of Georgetown, was destroyed. As Jagan has pointed out:

"The toll for the 1964 disturbances was heavy. About 2,668 households involving approximately 15,000 persons were forced to move their houses and settle in communities of their own ethnic group. The large majority were Indians. Over 1,400 homes were destroyed by fire. A total of 176 were killed and 920 injured. Damage to property was estimated at about \$4.3 million and the number of displaced persons who became unemployed reached 1,342."
(Jagan 1972:311)

In Windsor Forest there were none of the major incidents that occurred in other areas, but there was enough tension for the minority of Africans to leave and to move to more solidly African villages where they would feel safer. This process of ethnic polarisation occurred throughout the country, and there were a number of East

Indians who came to Windsor Forest to escape persecution in African dominated areas. The most serious incident was the bombing with a hand grenade of a shop of the Chinese leader of the Home Guard established by the army. However this went wrong and the youth with the grenade had his arm blown off and died. No charges resulted from this. The other main incident was the 'chopping' with a cutlass of the African station-master, who recovered from serious injuries to his arm. However there is widespread feeling that he largely brought this on himself by behaving so aggressively in the village.

Apart from these specific incidents there was a good deal of general tension in the village, and this took several forms. The most apparent was that of hostility to Africans and there were incidents of beatings, threatenings and the attempted burning of African homes. These were often generated by incidents in which Indians from the village had suffered at the hands of Africans in areas where they worked or through which they had to pass.

However these incidents were to a certain extent balanced by acts of solidarity on the part of Indians towards Africans they had known all their lives in some cases. I heard numerous stories of how Indians had helped their African neighbours by warning them of impending raids or helping them to get away safely, sometimes at the expense of incurring the wrath of the Indian mob who came to do the damage. Nevertheless the Africans did go and eventually the two-storey 'logie' or barrack range (known locally as the 'Ark') was burned down by activists and since this was the home of the majority of Africans in the village, its destruction effectively marked the end of their presence. The nine Africans who remain in the village are

almost all old and 2 are married to Indians. None of them feature in village affairs in any way and for most of the time they appear not to exist. Nowadays the sight of Africans in the village is rare enough to attract stares and when an African trader started selling in the big Saturday market this too evoked comment. Indeed several Africans who had business in the village and to whom I spoke expressed feelings of apprehension about entering the place, although it ought to be pointed out that Indians expressed exactly the same fears about visiting neighbouring African villages.

Although the departure of the Africans is the most striking feature of the demographic structure of the village, there have also been some significant changes in the Indian populations itself. As Table 4/2 shows the Indian population has grown by 37.6%. This is mainly due to the fact that the large numbers born in the 1940s and 1950s have survived to people the early middle age sections of the Table. The decline in mortality over this period is also shown by the general gap between the 1956 figures and the 1972 ones for all adult ages except the very highest.

However the most striking feature is the way in which the birth rate has dropped markedly in the past ten years, despite the fact that the average age of the women in the fertile years (15-45) is 23 years, and the average age of those who have been in this range in the past 15 years is 28 years. Such a development can occur for a number of complex reasons, and since the research did not set out to explore this aspect of community life specifically, only the most tentative suggestions can be made in explanation.

The most obvious factors, such as the changing demographic structure of the parental generation or large-scale migration can be ruled out here. This is because the kinds of natural disasters or epidemics that could have affected the age structure of the older generation did not happen. In addition, whilst there has been emigration from the village, it has not been of such a scale as radically to alter the demographic structure in this way. Thus one is left with a situation of deliberate choice to limit families.

Certainly many younger wives were emphatic that they did not want large families and it was normal for women to be counselled on sterilisation in maternity hospitals. Since 23% of births over the preceeding ten years had been in hospitals (of which nearly half - 43% - had been in private hospitals), a significant number of women in the village had been exposed to this pressure, and from the way in which men and women spoke about sterilisation it was apparent that everyone was well aware of its availability.

In the same way quite a number of women mentioned to my wife their intention to 'take stop' after what was considered to be a relatively small family of three or four children. Also the District Nurse, who acted as Midwife in the area and who was resident in the village, frequently averred that there was less and less work for her to do, and when she retired it was doubtful if she would be replaced. People in the village were also aware of contraception and it is likely that some of the more sophisticated and well educated women were using a contraceptive pill. There was also a general awareness of the existence of condoms, and it is likely that these too were used, though because of the unwillingness of many people to discuss such

matters at all I was not able to get an accurate picture of this area of domestic life.

What appeared to have been happening was that there was a growth of awareness of the advantages of smaller families now that the infant survival rate had improved so much over the past twenty years. This change had largely come about as a result of the ending of the scourge of malaria, together with other public health measures such as piped water, combined with improved diet and higher material living standards generally. There is still a very strong emphasis on marrying and producing children, with childless couples remaining an object of pity, but the emphasis on the pattern of child-bearing appears to be altering. With young marriage still favoured, especially for girls, it is becoming more common for couples to complete their family in a relatively short time and then to 'take stop' by the wife having a tubular ligation (or 'have her tubes tied' as it is usually expressed), which is the most common form of sterilisation. This method is used, rather than what is often seen as the Western ideal of having a number of children spaced more evenly over the wife's fertile years, which can only be achieved by a rigorous programme of effective birth control. However how far this trend will continue is very hard to tell, but certainly it is very much connected with the current position of women in Guyanese society and the economic and educational opportunities that are now available to them. This is something that will be discussed more fully later.

Although the population of the village has not been greatly affected by emigration, it has nevertheless taken place and has had consequences for other aspects of village life. Thus there are over

one hundred people who were born in the village and who are now living abroad, mainly in metropolitan countries such as America, Canada and Britain, though there are also a smattering in the islands of the West Indies. Occasionally some of these come back to 'take a walk', and during the first Christmas I spent in the village there were twelve such visitors in the community at the same time. These visits allow family, community and kin ties to be maintained and later in the fieldwork a man returned from London to look for a wife. His family had been looking for some time and had several possible candidates arranged for his approval, though he did not realise this at the time of his arrival. In the end he married a girl from the village and the ceremony took place before he left for London again, with his wife joining him some weeks later.

Of perhaps more significance, as far as the village is concerned, are those residents who have been abroad, of which there are 112, divided equally between men and women. The most commonly visited country is Trinidad (29), followed by Barbados (28) and Surinam (23). Of the metropolitan countries the most visited is Britain (24), followed by America (13) and Canada (12). Although some of these visits were in connection with business, most were privately funded trips to visit relatives now resident overseas, usually parents visiting children.

Guyana apparently has a high rate of immigration to the United States, with an additional, though related, problem of illegal immigration. The illegal immigrants are usually visitors who fail to return after visiting kin, though there are also a number of other dodges. People in the village were well versed in the ways in which

the regulations could be circumvented, although most felt that since these involved substantial amounts of money (by village standards) for the air fare alone, they were beyond their capabilities. Nevertheless, there were some who managed it, though there were also others who got caught. Since this was the time of the Vietnam war one of the ways one could avoid deportation on being caught was to volunteer for the American army, after which one was guaranteed American citizenship. I well remember seeing a mother receive a letter from her son who had done this, with the news that he was to be posted overseas - to Germany!

Whilst this contact with, and experience of, other countries is not something that all families have, it nevertheless has an influence on the village. For it acts as yet another channel down which ideas and values can flow, increasing the villagers' awareness of the possibilities that exist elsewhere. Although for most people the prospect of overseas travel was remote, they did, nonetheless, have a positive evaluation of more developed countries and were keen to know how much 'brighter' things were 'over there'. In this regard the more developed islands of the West Indies, such as Trinidad, Barbados and Jamaica were important, especially Trinidad, since not only was this the most visited country but also had a large Indian population with which the villagers could compare themselves.

THE HOUSEHOLD

Smith and Jayawardena have characterised the Windsor Forest household in 1956 as being basically a nuclear family with temporarily resident married sons and more distant relatives (1959:344), and the situation was basically the same in 1972. The ideal is said to have

been the situation where when sons marry they are provided with rice land by their father who also eventually builds them a house, preferably close to his (R.T.Smith 1957:506). This was always hard to achieve, and with the growth of the village population it has become much more so. Many people claimed that it was becoming more and more difficult to find housing for married children in the village and with 96% of all houselots already occupied this was tending to drive them away.

Smith and Jayawardena claim that in Windsor Forest:

"The operation of rice farms provides a base for the dependence of sons upon their fathers."
(1959, p. 346)

The implication of this is that before young married men can become heads of independent households they have to have built a basis of rice land and external sources of income on which they are able to support their family. However since only 53.6% of Indian families plant any rice and most of these have less than 6 acres there is little enough scope for this process to work. Furthermore the increase in the amount of full time employment since 1956 would seem to offer an opportunity to break out of this dependency at an early age. However this is inhibited by the uncertainty of employment on the one hand and the problem of the shortage of accommodation on the other. Thus we still have a situation where married children reside with parents, but not so much because of some normative ideal or even because of economic forces controlled by the father, but rather because of the more general economic constraints of a lack of suitable housing and a dependable income.

Because of this process of separation the definition of a household is problematic. As Smith and Jayawardena point out (1959:336) the process can be gradual and it is difficult to determine when an independent household has been formed. They resolved the problem thus:

"We have therefore counted as members of one household group all the inhabitants of a single dwelling (house or barracks apartment) unless there is a clear case of sub-letting of a flat or room."

(1959 p. 336)

In 1972 I did not find this a satisfactory definition to work with, since there appeared to be a significant number of houses in which very separate households were maintained, by force of circumstances rather than by the normative system usually. In one case three brothers, each with a wife and family, lived in a large house in which each family had a separate kitchen and ran a separate family régime.

I therefore decided to concentrate on the running of a separate domestic economy as the prime criterion for separation. As Smith and Jayawardena point out (1959:336) it is usual for the new wife to start cooking separately on her own hearth, or more commonly in 1972, her own paraffin stove. This I took to be the first sign of independence, and where this did not happen the household was classed as a single one. If separate cooking was accompanied by separate accounting and food purchase, then the households were counted as separate. In all houses where a separate household could have existed a question was always asked during the census visit about how household affairs were managed, and in most cases people were very forthcoming and usually made it very clear whether they considered themselves as constituting a separate unit or not.

TABLE 4/3 (A)
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION IN 1956 & 1972 - OVERALL

	1956		1972		Changes
	N	%	N	%	%
Head	310	15.4	472	17.7	52.3+
Spouse of Head	249	12.4	413	14.9	65.9+
Never-married child	1003	49.9	1497	54.1	49.3+
Ever-married child	75	3.7	74	2.3	1.3-
Spouse of child	60	3.0	48	1.7	20.0-
Son's child	123	6.1	85	3.1	32.0-
Daughter's child	52	2.6	84	3.1	61.5+
Consanguines	81	4.0	57	2.1	29.6-
Affines	52	2.6	35	1.3	32.7-
Non-kin	6	0.3	7	0.3	16.7+
TOTALS	2011	100.0	2772	100.0	

Source: 1956 figures, R.T. Smith & C. Jayawardena 1959
Table 2, p.338

As Table 4/3 shows, the household composition of the village has, in some ways, not altered since 1956, with the average composition of each household still being just under six persons (5.9). On the other hand there has been a marked alteration in some of the characteristics of these households. Most striking is the decline in the number of ever-married children present, and in particular the numbers of son's children present. In part this difference can be attributed to the different definition of a household that I used and which was mentioned above, so that the figures have to be viewed cautiously. Nevertheless I do feel that they fit in with the changing social

pattern since 1956, under which it has become more possible and common for sons to establish their own independent households at an earlier date than used to be the norm. This pattern of the decline of the extended household is also reflected in the lower proportions of both general consanguineal and affinal kin present in the households in 1972 in comparison with 1956.

TABLE 4/3 (B)

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION 1956 & 1972 - MALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

Relation to Head of House	1956		1972	
	N	%	N	%
<u>Males</u>				
Head	268	28.7	416	31.5
Never-married child	520	55.7	735	55.7
Ever-married child	35	3.7	38	2.9
Spouse of child	5	0.5	5	0.4
Son's child	36	3.9	49	3.7
Daughter's child	12	1.3	37	2.8
Consanguines	41	4.4	22	1.7
Affines	16	1.7	17	1.3
TOTALS	934	100.0	1320	100.0
<u>Females</u>				
Spouse of Head	248	29.2	412	34.3
Never-married child	421	49.5	642	53.4
Ever-married child	13	1.5	20	1.7
Spouse of child	33	3.9	37	3.1
Son's child	48	5.6	25	2.1
Daughter's child	12	1.4	26	2.2
Consanguines	38	4.5	25	2.1
Affines	35	4.1	15	1.2
TOTALS	850	100.0	1202	100.0

Source: 1956 figures, R.T. Smith & C. Jayawardena 1959
Table 3, p.343

TABLE 4/3 (C)

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION IN 1956 & 1972 - FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

Relationship to Head of House	1956		1972	
	N	%	N	%
<u>Males</u>				
Spouse of Head	1	1.0	-	-
Never-married child	36	35.6	54	61.4
Ever-married child	20	19.8	9	10.2
Spouse of child	3	3.0	1	1.1
Son's child	23	22.8	7	8.0
Daughter's child	14	13.9	10	11.4
Consanguines	1	1.0	5	5.7
Affines	-	-	2	2.3
TOTALS	101	100.0	88	100.0
<u>Females</u>				
Head	42	33.3	56	36.4
Never-married child	26	20.8	65	42.2
Ever-married child	7	5.6	7	4.5
Spouse of child	19	15.1	5	3.2
Son's child	16	12.7	4	2.6
Daughter's child	14	11.1	11	7.1
Consanguines	1	0.8	5	3.2
Affines	1	0.8	1	0.6
TOTALS	126	100.0	154	100.0

Source: 1956 figures, R.T.Smith & C.Jaayawardena 1959
Table 4, p.343

KINSHIP

Smith and Jayawardena (1959) have produced an extensive analysis of the kinship system of Indians in Guyana and so it is not necessary for me to cover the same ground here, especially since one of the communities that contributed to their earlier study was Windsor Forest. The basis of the Indian kinship system is, of course, that originating in India, although one of the most striking things about it is the extent to which it has been modified by the experience of the Plantation Society, as with almost all other aspects of Indian culture found in Guyana.

What is distinctive about Indian kinship as far as other Guyanese are concerned is the terminology and the relationships that are associated with it. Most Guyanese are in fact familiar with many of the most common Hindi kinship terms, such as baugi (elder brother's wife), chaacha and chaachi (paternal uncle and aunt), and these have featured in a number of popular songs as indicators of Indian identity. However, although most Indians know these terms, and some of the less common ones, they are frequently replaced by the more common English terms like 'aunt', 'uncle', 'father in law' etc.

More enduring are the norms about the relationships that are associated with specific kinship relations. Some of these are traditionally avoidance ones, especially the baraka/chutki (elder brother/younger brother's wife) one, and in the traditional Hindu marriage ceremony these two symbolically meet for the last time and the nature of the avoidance relationship is explained. Even though this is essentially a Hindu specification it is also considered a generally 'Indian' one binding on Muslims too, as is borne out in the

case to be discussed shortly. These norms are derived from the patrilineal Indian system of North India, but have been eroded in the context of Guyana, so that the full avoidance practice is almost never operated.

Similarly the kinship system as a whole has gradually become more bilateral over time as it came to approximate more and more to the European norm of the society in general. Thus inheritance can be from the mother's side, and can be passed on to daughters and their families, with economic need being more of a determinant of the pattern than specific kinship relationships are. Thus it is also common for a mother's and a wife's kin to be approached to obtain benefits such as jobs, temporary assistance and financial aid with major projects, though men feel that it is somewhat shameful to have to approach their wife's family for financial assistance with more everyday matters.

There is still a strong feeling that the members of a family should be solidary and that brothers in particular should assist one another, though there are many pressures to pull them apart. Similarly I was frequently informed of the desirability of a man in trouble going to the home of his sister, so that he would be under the protection of her as the controller of the household and not dependent on a stranger. On the other hand a parent seeking more long-term protection and assistance should go to a son, who would be in a position to make a commitment of his domestic resources to the needs of the parent. Smith & Jayawardena state that "no more extensive kinship groups than the three generation cluster ever emerge as functioning units"(1959:371). With the greater mobility of the Indian

population, both within the country and internationally, this statement is even more true.

MARRIAGE

As reported by Smith and Jayawardena (1959:349), most marriages continue to be arranged, with a marked preference for boys marrying a girl from out of the village. The criteria they specify as controlling the choice of spouse in the 1950s still largely applied in the 1970s viz:

That the spouse should be :

- a) East Indian
- b) Not close kin
- c) Of the same religious group
- d) Of appropriate caste origin (only in extreme cases)
- e) Economically suitable
- f) Desired by the child
- g) From the appropriate area

Inter-racial unions have always been discouraged by Indians, though they have taken place for a considerable time, since there were 15 Indians in the village in such unions and others who were known to have a mixed background. However they tended to assimilate to an Indian identity and were accepted as such as individuals. Furthermore given the recent history of racial tension it is not surprising that this process of assimilation should have increased and that the opposition to racially mixed marriages increased.

An indication of this was given to me when one night I was suddenly asked by my landlord, the main Hindu priest and a Marriage Officer able to make legally-binding marriages in his own right, to act as witness to a marriage between an Indian girl and an African boy. She was the niece of a lady in the village but was now living in Georgetown, where she had met the boy. She had come back to the

village to get the support of her aunt and uncle who had brought her up, but they had virtually abandoned their role in the affair since she was now independent of them. So she and the boy had gone to the pandit alone, and he had made the necessary arrangements for them. However the issuing of the licence and the actual solemnisation had taken place with some secrecy, the latter occurring at night in the pandit's house with only the couple and myself present as he officiated.

When the news of the union did break out there was some adverse comment, although not as much as there might have been since it was felt that the girl did not really 'belong' to the village. On the other hand it was felt that the pandit had acted rather sharply and not in the interests of the Indians, evidenced by his choice of me as witness, since it was claimed that it was doubtful if any other villager would take on the opprobrium of acting in this role. Fortunately people went out of their way to indicate that they did not blame me for acting as the witness, since it was apparent that the couple were intent on a union and if they had not married in the village would have done so in Georgetown. However it did further confirm the way in which the pandit could not be trusted to protect the interests of the Indian community and was concerned with ingratiating himself with the dominant African ethnic group.

Inter-religious unions, mainly between Hindus and Muslims, are also discouraged by both religious groups, although these too have been occurring for a long time and there were several of them in the village in 1972. What often seems to happen in such circumstances is that the couple decide to get married despite parental opposition,

possibly having to live in another community. In time they may be able to effect a reconciliation and return to the village and normal social relations. There is no public stigma attached to a religiously-mixed marriage in the way that there would be to a racially-mixed one.

The question of a child's choice in such a system is always problematic. Many people claimed that children were having more and more say in the matter and that there was a tendency to move to a more 'creole' system of personal choice. However it is likely that this is a claim that has been made for a long time, and certainly most fathers who were asked said that they would try to select a suitable spouse for their children. Traditionally the system has had some element of choice, mainly on the part of the boy, who is at liberty to inspect a number of potential brides, especially if he is very eligible. On the other hand the freedom of choice for the girl is much more restricted and is basically confined to the freedom to reject a boy whom she cannot abide. Several fathers said that they would choose a suitable boy with care, taking their daughter's wishes into account, and allow her to make a maximum of two rejections. After that they would force her to make the match they chose, since it was apparent that she was behaving irresponsibly. However there are signs of a loosening of this system, for of the 407 parents who answered the question "What kind of boy would you like your daughter to marry?", 55 (13.5%) indicated specifically that they would leave this to their daughter's own choice.

Those who follow parental wishes in such matters do not always end up in a happy situation, on the other hand. One man described how he

'had a rope tied round his neck' by his mother who made him marry a girl who had been married twice before. The marriage only lasted a few weeks and he left, but is now worried because the girl is suing him for alimony. However, it is usually girls who tend to lose most from unhappy unions, and one woman told how she married at the age of 14 to please her grandfather, who died three weeks after the wedding. Later she ran away home since she missed her brothers and sisters. The marriage was dissolved and she re-married much later having been very anxious about making the same mistake again. This time she married a widower who was some ten years older than her, and she claims she is now very happy.

Those children and parents who take a more 'modern' approach to the question of choosing a spouse can also come across problems. A girl who was to have married a boy at the age of seventeen did not do so because he would not agree to a legal union at the time. Her father felt that this would damage her interests and refused to allow the union to take place. She is now twenty two years old and worried that she has missed her chance to marry at all. In another case a girl who had grown up in a nearby sugar estate community married into the village. She came from a Christian family and had been to the local Junior Secondary school, which her husband had not. Her parents had wanted a Christian wedding, but the boy's family threatened to call off the wedding unless it were a Hindu one, and so the girl's parents agreed to a Hindu ceremony. The girl obeyed her parents and went ahead with the union: now she is very unhappy. She misses the relatively more 'bright' estate community, despises her husband's semi-literate state, dislikes the Hindu charms that his family put on her baby and the generally suffocating village life. She was very

vocal about how she felt she had been let down by her family, who had pressured her into entering the union. She also felt cheated of the aspirations that her education had raised in her. Hers is by no means an isolated case.

One of the reasons often advanced for allowing more children's choice in such matters is that when there is severe conflict between parents and a child there is a real possibility that the child will commit suicide. This is felt to be particularly a problem with daughters. There were three suicide attempts in the village during my stay, although one involved a boy seeking to escape from a domineering father: he died. The others involved girls, and in one case the girl felt that her marriage to a boy from the same village would not be able to take place because a quarrel between the two families was becoming public and so shameful. She drank poison but recovered and eventually married the boy. The other case was of a Hindu girl of supposedly high caste who fell in love with a Muslim boy next door. Her parents opposed the match in deference to the expected views of the father's mother. The girl drank poison and died.

The drinking of poison is the most favoured means of attempting suicide and with the growing use of insecticides and weedkillers there are plenty of these readily available in the village. To 'drink Malashen' (the brand name of a popular weedkiller) has become an accepted euphemism for a suicide attempt and the drugs are sufficiently potent to ensure that most attempts are successful. This is a constant worry to many parents and it is not uncommon for teenage daughters to threaten suicide over their arguments with their parents about less important matters than marriage. It has also lead to the

fashion for younger teenage girls to stage dramatic suicide attempts or even fake them in order to bring pressure to bear on parents. The local Medical Officer of Health confirmed that in his view the frequency of such faked attempts is growing.

Smith & Janywardena (1959:350-355) outline four types of marriage available to Indians in Guyana. Although there have been certain changes since then the basic structure remains the same, and can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Marriage by magistrate. This was devised at the time of the continued arrival of immigrants from India and was designed to prevent bigamy by those who had left wives behind there. It entailed the obtaining of a 'non-impediment certificate' from the Immigration Agent General's office to say that they had no record of any reason why the couple should not marry. The magistrate then posted the 'notice of intention to marry' for three weeks and then performed the marriage. However this form of marriage has been of declining significance for some time, although it still exists as a form of legal marriage.
- 2) Legalised customary unions. This type was created under the provisions of the Indian Labour Ordinance to attempt to provide some form of recognition of traditional Hindu and Muslim ceremonies. Under this procedure the couple have to obtain a 'non-impediment certificate' as above and at the time of the wedding to have a special form witnessed and signed by the officiating priest. This is then registered with the

Registrar General as a 'customary and legal' union (since 1959 the Registrar General and the Immigration Agent General's offices have been combined, and so handle all aspects of the registration of unions). However, as Smith & Jayawardena point out (1959:353) this procedure is open to a good deal of manipulation to allow the legitimization of unions religiously contracted some time ago.

- 3) Customary unions. These are unions created by the public performance of religious rituals, either Hindu or Muslim. In the past this was the normal form of marriage, though it offers no legal union. The religious wedding, with full public participation, though in varying degrees of grandeur, is still the norm, though nowadays it is also legalised. Thus almost all people go through a religious ceremony at some time in their lives. Since 1967 all registered pandits and moulvis (meijis) have been obliged to perform religious ceremonies that also incorporate a legal component as specified in (2) above. This was contained in the Pandits Council Act, No 13, of 1967 and was designed to increase the rate of legalised unions. However, although the trend is undoubtedly to more legal unions it is still possible for certain people to perform customary unions without legalising them. Because of the need for an orthodox Hindu wedding to be performed by a Brahmin, it would be possible for such a Brahmin who had had the appropriate religious training to perform the ceremony

to the satisfaction of those concerned, but without being a registered (and regularly practising) pandit. However it is likely that these cases are rare and there were no such persons in the Windsor Forest area.

4) Marriage officers. Under the Marriage Ordinance, Chapter 164, Christian priests were created marriage officers able to act as their own registrar, as happens with established churches in Britain. In 1957 Ordinance 35 added certain Hindu and Muslim priests to this group. Priests so registered have, in addition to the ability to register their own marriages, the power to perform a legally binding marriage by licence, without religious ceremonies, like that performed by the magistrate in (1). In the Windsor Forest area the Hindu priest was the only marriage officer, all the other Hindu and Muslim priests being obliged to perform marriages under (2) above.

The question of the legality of unions is problematic. As Table -/- shows there has been a clear move to more legal unions in the past decades, and it is the intention of the government that this should continue. However this trend covers a number of complex permutations, for the religious and legal parts of the union may be separated by some considerable time. In the past when the customary union alone was more common there arose the problem of the inheritance by the children of the union. In the event that the parent left a will there was little difficulty in allocating the property, but for those who died intestate the legal difficulties were considerable. For customary-only unions have no legal status at all and the children of

such unions have no automatic right to the estate of a deceased parent.

One way round this problem is for the parents to legitimate the children either singly as they are born, or collectively. This can be done by the Supreme Court on the plea of disinherited sons of a deceased and intestate father, though this is lengthy and expensive. It can be achieved more cheaply by the widow starting a legitimation registration on their behalf. However the most common and most convenient way of doing this is for the parents to legalise their union, usually with a licence wedding from a marriage officer under (-) above. After this the parents can send the Marriage Certificate, birth Certificates of the children to be legitimated and an affidavit claiming their parentage, to the Registrar General and have them legitimated.

Although it is now nearly universal for unions to be legalised at the time they take place, until the fairly recent past it was still common for unions to be customary only and the legalisation to be left till later. This was frequently rationalised to me as being a way of checking that the union would last the test of time. For with arranged marriages there was a risk that the union would not work and it was deemed wiser to wait to see if it did before making it too indissoluble. It was usually after the birth of several children that a couple decided to legalise their union, although it was not uncommon for couples to wait twenty years before doing so. Nowadays it is claimed that with couples having more say in the selection of their spouses the need for a trial period of non-legality is less necessary. However there are many who continue to arrange their children's

marriages, just as there are many who claim that the traditional system was just as effective as the present one.

TABLE 4/4

LEGAL STATUS OF UNIONS - INDIANS ONLY

	Legal at Marriage		Legal Later		Not Legal		TOTALS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Before 1940	50	28.3	96	54.2	31	17.5	177	100
1940-1949	76	44.7	75	44.1	19	11.2	170	100
1950-1959	80	47.1	60	35.3	30	17.7	170	100
1960-1969	100	80.0	38	15.2	12	4.8	250	100
1970 onwards	63	82.9	2	2.6	11	14.5	76	100
TOTAL	469	55.6	271	32.2	103	12.2	843	100

DOMESTIC LIFE

The traditional form of Hindu wedding ceremony has been fully described by Smith and Jayawardena (1958) and is still largely the same today. When the new bride, or doolahen, first comes to the home of her husband she is, not surprisingly, shy and apprehensive. It takes time for her to adapt fully to the new environment, and many women told of how they had hardly left their new home for weeks on end as new brides. Once the initial period of novelty and welcome wears off she tends to be treated primarily as another worker in the household, with general household duties to attend to. Not surprisingly this has led to a fund of stories of how mothers-in-law have exploited young brides and made their lives a misery. A number

of older women in the village reported leaving their new husbands under just such a régime and often the marriage breaks up if this happens.

With the birth of her own children the bride improves in status and with her own home the process speeds up. In this way she takes on more and more responsibility for the managing of the home, with, in addition, the traditional option of earning some money from her own economic activities such as growing greens, tending fowl or sewing. She develops a range of friends and interests and begins to take a part in the round of religious ritual functions that are so common within the village, both as an attender at those of others and as the giver of her own.

Wives have to cater for the needs of the household and their day usually begins before others. Most rise early, usually about 5 or 6 am, though there are many who rise as early as 4 am if they have husbands who have to leave early. They prepare the food for the family's breakfast, usually called 'tea' in Guyana. This derives from estate times when the staff would take a light meal on rising and return to have their main breakfast after a significant time at work. Thus the midday meal is called 'breakfast'! This meal usually consists of roti (Indian unleavened bread) with possibly the remains of the previous night's meal or a simple vegetable dish. After preparing this the wife often goes back to bed leaving the food keeping warm in the kitchen until the rest of the household rises. Most villagers have developed the habit of rising at approximately the right time, but many wives delighted in telling of how they had risen to cook, only to find that it was still the middle of the night.

Some, without clocks, had prepared the food and only found out about their mistake the next day from neighbours who were awake for some religious function or domestic problem such as a sick child.

With the husband off to work or the backdam the wife then gets the children off to school and sets about her domestic duties of cleaning the house, washing, going to market and later in the day preparing the evening meal. Usually this is a rice-based meal with a vegetable curry, though it may be one of fish or shrimps. Hindu villagers are mainly vegetarian, although only a minority are strict adherents to religious precepts. Most are primarily concerned to avoid eating beef, though most have done so at some time or other, and many joke about those who work in town and eat the ubiquitous hamburgers offered in city snack bars. For special occasions many will eat chicken curry or even mutton curry or goat curry, though these are rarer since the animals are not so common. With numerous people in the village keeping fowl there is no shortage of birds and the main inhibition is price. Most butchers are Muslims and there is one who visits the village weekly to sell beef to co-religionists.

At the evening meal the children eat first and the parents together later. After this the evening is taken up with social obligations like religious functions, relaxing in the sugar bag hammock, drinking in a rumshop or if it is the busy time of the crop, preparing for the next day's work. The adults are usually in bed by 10 pm, though functions can go on much later at the weekends, and in the case of weddings, right through the night. As far as sleeping arrangements go, the parents usually sleep in the main bed, and may either be joined by a small child or have a child sleeping on a bed in the same

room. It is common for children to sleep with adults, including grandparents, until almost adolescence. Alternatively they share beds and bedrooms if these are available, and almost everyone thought the western ideal of having one's own bedroom as very strange and likely to make children lonely. In poorer houses children sleep in the main room of the house, perhaps being moved off adult's beds when they retire. Also it is still quite common for children to sleep on the floor on sacks if the family is very poor.

Thus by middle age the timid bride can have matured into a competent mother and housewife who has grown to formidable proportions and who can feel free to make her opinions known both at home and in the more public world of women, such as the weekly market. Although publicly deferring to men, she may have developed an authority to match that of her husband in private and be a force not to be trifled with. This is particularly true if her husband is economically weak and cannot earn very much, or (which is often the same thing) is physically weak through illness or injury. In such cases the income that the wife can generate from her gardening or other skills is crucial for the survival of the family.

The same can apply when the husband drinks too much and fails to hand over sufficient money to support the family. This is an all too common story in a society where rum is relatively cheap (\$4 per bottle - the equivalent of a day's minimum wage, but frequently drunk in quarter or half bottle amounts). There were many heart-rending cases of family neglect, poverty, violence and misery arising from excessive male drinking and this was something about which women complained frequently. One woman, for instance, spoke of her husband, a

fisherman, as a man who drank a lot and "where he falls down so he sleeps". When drunk he beat her and now she wants to leave him, but cannot afford to. He sometimes gets a very good return from his catch but "He don't give ahwe even the rubber band it tie with". Another, younger wife told of how her husband was a 'nice boy', but when he had 'drunk out' all the housekeeping he started to beat her and terrorise the children, so she returned to her family. Her father did not want her and the children to become 'brutalised', but was still trying to obtain a reconciliation, although the daughter was not so sure she wanted it. Life for such women can be made worse by frequent pregnancies, though here there is now some assistance through sterilisation. One such woman recounted how she was sterilised after her fourth child six years before. Now without the worry of "getting a baby every year" she can face up to her husband's drinking, womanising and abandoning the family for long periods and has learned to cope with what she sees as her lot. The effects of drink on a marriage was a problem which also greatly worried parents looking for a husband for their daughter.

However this is not what all women want and it is possible to find a number, both married and single, who have set their face against such traditional ways. They are usually among those who work in Georgetown and tend to be professionals such as teachers. They talk in terms of a 'modern' outlook that approximates to the western ideal of the liberated woman making her own career and doing things on her own terms. Of course many such aspirations are unlikely to be fulfilled, especially by girls who are not yet married, and it does seem likely that there will be a tussle between their expressed aspirations for a more 'modern' urban lifestyle and the realities of their more traditional milieu.

On the other hand there are married women who have either refused to have children because they do not wish to stop working, or - more commonly - have delegated the care of their children to enable them to continue working. Of course in the latter situation there is a good deal of pressure of economic necessity about the wife working, but nevertheless there were several women who expressed the view that if they had to give up working they did not know how they would cope with the boredom of being in the village all day.

THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

In the 1950s the family was the basic economic unit, especially as far as rice cultivation was concerned (R.T.Smith & Jayawardena 1959:341). This central control of resources by the household head, who made decisions about planting and reaping, and who nominally owned the main resources of land, equipment and animals, helped to maintain the unity of the family and allowed it to take on certain 'joint family' features (ibid). However this assessment was based on the traditional system of rice cultivation and at a time when this was the dominant economic activity. One of the features of Windsor Forest in the 1970s is the extent to which labour has moved out of rice cultivation and is now engaged in paid employment. Thus in 1972 47% of Indian households had one person in regular employment, whilst 27% had two such persons and 18% had three or more people working regularly in paid employment other than rice production.

Thus the economic unity of the household group has less logic in a situation where income is derived from a diversity of sources, especially when these include regular paid employment out of the community. In such a situation the household head has less

justification for asserting a central control over economic decisions. In the case of unmarried children it appears that the head of the household, especially if it is a father, exerts a general control over their income as part of his general authority. However even under this system the boy or girl concerned still usually ends up with more money under their own control than they would have had under the traditional system, when they would have been dependent on their father for even the smallest amount of spending money. Such situations still exist, although they tend to be the objects of pity and comment rather than approval.

An example of the kind of régime that used to be common was furnished by a single minded widower who was afraid of being neglected in his old age, and so kept all things in his name so that his children could not get at them without his approval. He was an able and industrious farmer who still had a son at home helping with the land. The 'boy', aged 20 years, was given only \$2 per week, half the minimum daily wage, since as his father said, he had a bicycle and did not need to spend his money on hire cars to get about. Furthermore his father claimed that what he did get he spent on going to the cinema, and would only go every day if given more money. If he wanted more money he should 'do some work to earn it'. However one has to be careful of this kind of approach, for the case of the boy who committed suicide, mentioned earlier, arose from just such a family situation and a similarly over-strict father.

The management of the family finances is a continuing problem and there are a number of different solutions. In a great many cases it is a joint venture with the husband and wife acting as a team, and many

wives were able to discuss the state of their finances, how much was spent on maintaining the family, what savings they had and how much had been made from the previous rice crop. These, however, tend to come from the more successful and educated sections of the community, and there are other examples of wives who had no idea how much money their husbands earned. In almost all cases the household has to obtain food items on credit from the village shops until the time came for the twice yearly income from rice. In the case of monthly and weekly paid workers the period of credit would be shorter. Almost all households in the village use this credit system, and many complained of being cheated, whilst the shopkeepers universally complained of the same treatment from customers.

For those engaged in rice, larger purchases tend to be made in Georgetown after the crop income has come in. Smith mentions (1957) the special visits paid for these purposes, but now going to town for shopping is not such a novel phenomenon and many women shop there weekly. They still tend, however, to restrict themselves to the Indian shops just out of the city centre rather than the larger stores in the very centre. They also try to shop wisely, and Ram, one of the village's leading figures, complained to me that shopping with his wife was so tiring because she insisted on visiting all the possible sources of what she wanted before deciding which was cheapest, then going round again to actually purchase items, by which time Ram claimed to be worn out. It is in this area of frugal housekeeping as well as bringing in additional income from other sources that a woman traditionally shows herself to be a good wife and mother.

As far as saving is concerned, the most common and oldest saving

system is that of the 'throwing box', or monthly savings club, of which there are several in the village. The rate of contribution is usually about \$10 per month, with dividend being paid out in ten months. However it is possible to get an advance from the 'banker' at a small charge and this person takes a commission of \$2.50 for every \$100 held. Most families with regular savings also have a savings account in one of the commercial banks, whose branches are in the sugar estates on either side of the village. There is also a branch at Vreed en Hoop by the ferry stelling and so for those travelling to town there was no problem about getting money. In addition quite a few villagers have insurance policies and there are two men in the village who were sales agents for insurance companies. It was also possible to borrow money from the commercial banks for businesses, agriculture, equipment and even weddings. A smaller, though cheaper, source of money for agriculture were the Government agencies such as the Rice Action Committees and the small co-operative societies that had been set up in colonial times. Finally a more restricted, but potentially more flexible, source were the rice millers of the community. Financial problems were a worry for all and a great worry for many. Nevertheless there were a range of sources of funding available and most people were very familiar with how to use them.

When children of the household are married the situation is rather different. Here a worker has a good deal more autonomy and is not so likely to be under the control of a parent and indeed the married child and family may constitute a separate household which is only living in the parental home because of the lack of alternative accommodation. Thus these households are much more like those described for sugar estates, where the son is not economically

dependent on the father, than the traditional rice village situation (Jayawardena 1963).

This is a summary based on general characteristics and there is a good deal of individual variation to be noted in reality. Thus there are numerous cases of children who deviated from what were presented as the most basic precepts of filial loyalty, of sons who brought virtually none of their wages home, of elderly parents suffering real privations because of the unwillingness of grown-up children to help them and of households where the nominal parental head is in fact under the control of a young son or daughter. On the other hand there were also cases of families where working children gave their income to their parents and others where married children continued to live at home and to defer to parents until well into middle age, which was the traditional thing for younger sons to do.

Thus examples of the traditional family system continue to be found and it remains possible for the normative pattern to be continually referred to and lauded. At the same time the structural characteristics that served to buttress the power of the head of the family under the traditional farming system have largely gone. Thus it is likely that there will be more and more cases emerging where the family pattern differs from the traditional ideal, in that sons will have more autonomy and move away from the parental home earlier, but as long as the pattern of behaviour does not conflict too much with the traditional ideal then the latter is still likely to be advanced at the normative level.

EDUCATION

The problems of aspirations and expectations come too in the case of children. As has been mentioned there has been a noticable decline in the birth rate in the preceding ten years and for the most part this is the result of married couples, especially the wives, deciding that they do not wish to have large families. It was common for both men and women to proclaim the virtues of small families in terms of the saving on expenses and the reduction in the problems of educating their children. Closely related to this was the issue of obtaining employment for them once they had left school. It was most striking that in such discussions the aspirations were invariably in terms of getting a job, rather than obtaining rice land.

This very much corresponds to the 'modernisation' view noted in relation to working women, and is also reflected in attitudes to education. Indian parents at one time had a reputation for being indifferent to education, although of late the situation has altered radically. Almost all parents who had children of school age made efforts to send them to school and most were very anxious for them to obtain as much benefit from the school as possible. 175 children from the village attended Senior Secondary Schools (19.2% of the school-age population), with almost equal numbers attending the Government Secondary (87) and private secondary schools (88). Considering the outlay on uniforms, books and travel involved in sending a child to a private secondary school the numbers are most impressive and a powerful indication of the new attitude to education.

A further indication of this attitude is given by the fact that when a sugar estate community some 5 miles away managed to build a

large new Junior Secondary School (which is non-selective) by aided self-help, some 70 pupils were withdrawn from the Windsor Forest school by local parents and sent to the new one in the hope of their getting a better education. Even now there are several children from Windsor Forest still attending this school.

Perhaps even more striking is the fact that there are 21 people in the village who are undergoing post-secondary training in Georgetown. This mostly involves the Government Technical Institute, where full-time courses are run. However there are amongst this number six who are students at the University of Guyana. At the time of the fieldwork this was an almost entirely part-time institution, which meant that students had to do a full day's work, usually in a clerical or teaching job, and then go on to the University to study at night. Needless to say this was a very demanding régime, but the pressure for entry did not diminish, especially from Indians. These students had before them the examples of those who had managed to do well out of their educational successes. One villager had managed to become a doctor and practised in Barbados, whereas there were several others who had managed to prosper in North America. I was shown the graduation photos sent by several sons and met an ex-villager returning from Canada who had worked his way through night school and University there to become a qualified engineer. However perhaps the most striking example frequently held up was that of a village boy who had managed to win himself a scholarship to the University of the West Indies, and from there had obtained a scholarship to complete a PhD at the London School of Economics.

However the point can be made that these pupils and their parents

are primarily interested in credentials rather than education as such. It represents a major shift from the traditional attitude to education in such communities and denotes an orientation to participation and success in the wider society which was absent from the traditional farming activity.

This is also shown in the forms of job training which school leavers eagerly seek. Apart from the more obvious and formal training that the University and Technical Institute offer, there are apprenticeships for mechanics and welders which are popular, as well as the more traditional activities of carpentry and tailoring. However it is the girls who feature most prominently in this area, since the most popular form of such training is at a secretarial school.

The most prestigious secretarial schools are in Georgetown and 36 girls from the village attend these. There is, however, also one in the village run by the sister of a village resident who travels in each day from her own village on the West Bank. Like the Georgetown schools this offers training in typing, shorthand and general office routine such as filing and accounting. This school has 44 pupils from Windsor Forest as well as several from other villages nearby. Secretarial work is considered to be a glamorous job and is easily the most popular to which girls may aspire, as indeed they do. However it is quite another matter to get a job once one has a training, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

As an alternative there is the more traditional training offered by sewing schools. It was usual for girls to finish their education by a

course of sewing lessons that would enable them to save money by making their family's clothes. These have remained popular, especially with the growing availability of sewing machines. Smith (1964:319) mentions these as major items of household expenditure and now 337 Indian households (71%) have one. Many of these are modern electric ones, and some are very sophisticated and are often used for producing garments for sale. There are five sewing schools in the village which offer a range of courses progressing from basic sewing to dress designing and what amounts to a seamstress apprenticeship. Nowadays the basic sewing skills learned in these schools are not only utilised for the sewing of family clothes, but also to enable girls to seek jobs as sewing machine operatives in clothing factories. These factories mainly produce shirts, childrens' clothing and simple dresses and are to be found in neighbouring areas as well as big ones in Georgetown. At present there are 14 women employed in this way.

RELIGION

Not all Indians in Windsor Forest are Hindus, and indeed Smith reports the village as having one of the highest proportions of Muslims in the country with approximately 700 (35%) (R.T.Smith & Jayawardena 1967:78). However the proportion seems to have declined from the 1950 figure to 31% (864 of 2772) in 1972. There are in addition a very small number of Christians who, unlike the main religious groups, are continually seeking to proselytise, although without much success. All of the Chinese population are Christians, usually Anglicans, as are the Africans in the community.

Hindus

The Hindus are split into three main orthodoxies, with the largest being the followers of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha. This represents the conventional Guyanese transformation of the Sanskritised north Indian version of Hinduism and represents the 'established' form in the country. The devotees are led by a Brahmin priesthood who alone are allowed to conduct rituals. There were two full-time priests, or pandits, of this type in the village, and one part-time. The two full-time ones were related, the elder being the uncle of the other, and were bitter enemies. The elder one, who was my landlord, was the 'official' pandit since he had the use of the village temple and was very widely known throughout West Demerara as a traditional pandit. His nephew had the reputation of being very much better educated in Hinduism and sought to instruct his followers more than his uncle. The part-time pandit was a young and well educated clerical worker who only performed occasional rituals for family and friends.

Although there were daily prayers in the Temple and a special 'service' (as the regular rituals were termed - the Temple was also frequently called the 'church') on Sundays, these attracted only a handful of adherents, mostly women. Far more significant as far as the village was concerned were the 'works' that were done in people's homes and which attracted a congregation of a handful to a hundred. These ranged from the private and intimate family rituals like pitri paksh concerning the souls of departed kin to the more public and popular rituals such as a jandhi ceremony where the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, is propitiated.

Jandhi ceremonies, which involved the planting of the distinctive

red flag on a long bamboo that are such a noticable feature of Indian villages, are by far the most popular Hindu rituals, and a busy pandit occasionally performs five or six of them per day. Bigger gatherings that could attract anything from ten to a hundred guests usually took the form of kathas or readings from the Ramayan, selected to remind the faithful of their obligations. They were usually held at night and were very well attended, being a way of reciprocating social obligations since the guests all had to be fed in some way afterwards. They also involved the singing of religious songs or bhajans and so were rather jolly events, as well as providing an opportunity to meet and gossip. Finally weddings represented the biggest functions organised by families and usually cost a great deal of money, with anything from 50-200 guests being common.

In addition to the Sanatanists there were two sects which had smaller numbers but which more than made up for this by their activity and devotion. The first was the Bhakti Panth, a traditionally oriented group who nevertheless stood out against the dominance of the Brahmins. The local membership had emerged in the 1950s as a result of missionary activity from India, which had caused bad feeling and dissension in the Temple. The adherents had left the Temple and managed to build their own wooden meeting house, where they continued under the tutelage of the leading light of the group, a deeply religious farmer who was well read in the traditional literature of India. The followers were nearly all women and they met to conduct traditional rituals together and periodically members would go off to meetings and courses held at the movement's Ashram in a village some thirty miles away beyond Georgetown. Although definitely active the group has now stabilised and relations with the Sanatanists are cautiously friendly.

The same could not be said about the other Hindu sect, the Arya Samaj. This radically reformist movement which was founded in India in the last century was introduced to Guyana in the 1930s but did not become active in Windsor Forest until the late 1940s and 1950s. The most important teaching is that the Brahmin priesthood is irrelevant and that all knowledgeable followers should be able to conduct the Hawan or fire ritual as part of a domestic and communal celebration. The rituals and teachings are claimed to have been derived from the Vedic literature of Hinduism's past and are held to be more authentic than the idolatrous practices of conventional Sanatanism. On the whole it presents itself as a purer form of Hinduism based on belief and performance rather than birth and authority (Jayawardena 1966).

When this doctrine began to be preached in the Windsor Forest Temple in the 1940s it produced an uproar and the Aryans were forceably ejected as heretics. They then formed their own group and built their own church in a burst of enthusiasm, though it was later moved to another site after disagreements over the ownership of the land on which it originally stood. The Samaj tended to attract men and women who felt that they could improve themselves by their own efforts, and in the atmosphere of economic and political advance that characterised the post-war era the Samaj provided a suitable framework for the 'progressive' element, as both Smith and Jayawardena have pointed out (Smith 1964:324; Jayawardena 1966). The Samaj still likes to think of itself as having this rôle today.

They command the most loyal and committed following of all the Hindu organisations and operate in a number of areas. Their Sunday Hawan services attract the largest congregations and their Hindi

school held in the late afternoons has a larger attendance than that of the Sanatanists, although even so the numbers are small. They also have a women's section which meets regularly in the bottom flat of the Sama j's building to learn handicraft skills and to hear talks. They also had a youth arm, the Arya Virdal, which after 'sleeping' for a number of years was beginning to become active again during my fieldwork, as will be discussed in Chapter 7.

The Aryans celebrate the main Hindu festivals of Holi, Phagwah and Diwali and now also perform marriage ceremonies. Smith and Jayawardena (1959) refer to the Vedic wedding as a possible form, but Smith did not encounter any in Windsor Forest. I attended two during my fieldwork (though only one in Windsor Forest) and now there are 25 couples in the village who have been married under these rites.

Muslims

The Muslims are fewer in number than the Hindus and have fewer groupings. Although there are different Muslim sects in Guyana the vast majority are orthodox Sunnis, as are all those in Windsor Forest. Until recently they were all members of the same jamaat, as the Koran enjoins, but now after a long and acrimonious conflict there are two mosques and two jamaats. However the split occurred over personal and political considerations rather than doctrinal ones. The meiji or priest is the largest shopkeeper in the village and has three brothers, all of whom are successful businessmen, and in one case, very successful.

The meiji also has a reputation for having a voracious sexual appetite and was involved in an outrageous sexual scandal that

involved impregnating his younger brother's wife. This brother, who was in fact only a half-brother, was not one of the businessmen brothers, but was rather simple and worked for the meiji as a van man. The story had been whispered about for some time, but became very much more widely known when a rival female shopkeeper and foe of the meiji persuaded the girl to talk about the incident whilst the shopkeeper's brother recorded the conversation on a tape recorder in the next room. This was then played widely throughout the area. Although this happened before I went to the field and though I have not heard the tape, I met so many who had. Since the recording was not challenged, I have no doubt that this happened.

One of the things that is most interesting about this incident is that whilst the relationship between a man and his younger brother's wife is traditionally an avoidance one for Hindus (and is specified as such during the traditional wedding ceremony (R.T.Smith & Jayawardena 1958:324)), Muslims too tend to accept this as part of 'old India custom' even though it has no religious force as far as they are concerned. Thus the deviations of the meiji were doubly heinous since he had chosen to break a sexual taboo in a particularly offensive way.

After this there was a movement to have the meiji deposed, and he stood down temporarily. But after a while he contrived to have the matter raised again and for a new election to take place, at which he engineered his re-election. It is generally believed that this was achieved by using the economic power of himself and his brothers, and in his case this was very effective, since many families were in debt to his shop. A section of the jamaat could not tolerate this manipulation and broke away to found their own jamaat, though they

appear to have done so with misgivings. They did so out of the strength of their religious conviction, whilst at the same time knowing that they were breaking the Prophet's demand for unity in the local community. The wider Muslim establishment in the country, the Anjuman, was brought in and considerable pressure was put on the defectors to return, which they refused to do without an investigation. Although the break-away was condemned, so was the behaviour of the meiji, both in the original issue and over his re-election. This was countered by his family who mobilised their extensive contacts throughout the country and the Anjuman to obtain supporting statements. Thus after a long and acrimonious series of exchanges lasting over several years the Anjuman reluctantly decided that there would have to be two jamaats in the village, since it was apparent that the meiji and his family could mobilise enough power to prevent his being removed.

Of the 852 Muslims (including children) in the village, 510 (60%) are nominally associated with the old mosque, whilst 342 (40%) are attached to the new one. However there are differences between the two followings. The old mosque has the character of an established group to which all are allocated by default, so that the active membership is considerably less than the nominal total. On the other hand the new mosque attracts only those who feel sufficient of a commitment to break the injunction against splitting the jamaat, and a number of members of the old mosque admitted that this was all that was preventing them from moving. Others admitted to being held to the old mosque by ties of obligation to the meiji's family, who were great providers of hospitality, and in some cases straight indebtedness to his shop.

Nevertheless there is a good deal of reciprocal recruiting and it is not at all unusual to see members of the new mosque at functions such as weddings working on a potential defector from the old mosque in an attempt to persuade him to move over. On the other hand the meiji's family continue to organise a continuing round of impressive and lavish functions at the home of the most successful of the brothers, to which all were invited. Although nominally under the aegis of the jamaat, these are in fact paid for entirely by him.

Both mosques engage in the full round of religious activities and although the old mosque can generate a slightly larger congregation for special festivals, the normal Friday prayers are better attended in the new mosque. Their koranic school also has more pupils. Both mosques are engaged on building programmes, and since its foundation in 1968 the new mosque has put up a small but effective building in concrete. However it still lacks a dome and facilities such as a school house, which it is hoped to add later. By contrast the old mosque is a much larger building with all the facilities required by the jamaat. However it is made of wood and is rather old and dilapidated, so that the meiji and his family have persuaded the jamaat to commit themselves to the construction of an impressive new mosque in concrete which will be one of the biggest in the country, if ever it is built. Thus once again the economic power of the meiji's family was used to keep the old jamaat in the fight with the new mosque.

Christians

By contrast the Christian groups are very small, with only 161 adherents in the village, of whom only 88 were Indians. The largest Christian section in the village were the Chinese, who together with the Africans were Anglicans. However because there was no Anglican church in the village they had to attend one on a sugar estate some five miles away. The Anglicans did not worship in the Christian church in the village, which was run by the Christian Catholics (not to be confused with the Roman Catholics), who were a relatively conventional church based in Zion, Illinois. The minister was an Indian who lived on a nearby sugar estate and who looked after three churches of the sect in West Demerara, where they mainly worked amongst Indians. The church began preaching in Windsor Forest in 1955, and now has some two dozen adherents in the village, apparently a drop from a few years previously when the numbers were as high as 36. Apparently the church used to have some African followers, but after the disturbances of the 1960s most have moved out of what they see as an Indian church.

In addition to the Christian Catholics there is a very small group of Full Gospel Church members. They started to work in the village in the middle of 1971 and had only a handful of followers who met in each other's houses. They had not held any public meetings and most people did not know of their existence.

ADMINISTRATION

Since being taken over by Government, the estates of Windsor Forest La Jalousie and Hague were administered by the Department of Lands & Mines, as the Government Estates, West Demerara. However, from the earliest times it was envisaged that they would eventually come under the Local Government Board as a Country District (Minute of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines, Combined Court No. 600, 1911, at para 13, CO 114/137). With the continuing tussles, which occurred in 1917 and 1923, over whether the estate should be sold or not, the long-term administration of the estates was nevertheless shelved.

The formal control of the Commissioner and later successors such as the Land Development Department continued until 1964, although an Advisory Committee, founded in 1945 after protests at a further attempt to incorporate the community into the national local administration, took an increasingly major rôle in the administration of the village during that time. At first the Committee's rôle was purely consultative, with the administration being organised through the Estate Office at Windsor Forest. Here the clerk employed by Lands & Mines collected rates and made payments for work done in the village and authorised by the Superintendant. The rates and their expenditure were discussed by the Advisory Committee and the Superintendant.

In 1961 the Government, this time under the control of the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP), made another attempt to make the village part of a Local Authority, but once again they were repulsed by local pressure. In this case the Government gave three years for the matter to be resolved, but by the time this period was up the Government had changed to that of the Peoples National Congress (PNC), which had a

different set of priorities, and so the matter was shelved yet again. Thus in 1962 the Advisory Committee became the Settlers' Committee and continued to play a co-operative rôle with the Government administration of the village.

Nevertheless in December 1964 the PNC Government withdrew all administration from the West Demerara Estates themselves, with no staff remaining in the area. This move had been planned for some time and was part of a move to simplify the administration and make economies. Henceforth the District Commissioner's office in Vreed en Hoop housed the Crown Lands Ranger who made weekly visits to the old estate office at Windsor Forest to collect payments for leases, to make transfers and conduct other business. The Department of Lands & Mines continued to administer the cultivation area, in conformity with the leases, through the continued presence of a number of Rangers, most of whom lived in the village. They supervised the flow of irrigation water and arranged for the upkeep of the drainage and irrigation.

By now the Department had also withdrawn from the administration of the housing areas, the intention clearly being that this should become the responsibility of a Local Authority, but because of local opposition this had not come about. So when Lands & Mines withdrew, the administration of the village was handed over to the Settlers' Committee as an interim measure (Report of the Windsor Forest and La Jalousie Settlers' Committee, 1968-70, p. 7). This was immediately followed by a legal tussle as the Settlers' Committee sought to gain access to the \$174.72 (£36.40 at the then current rate of exchange) remaining from the rates levied by Lands & Mines. However the Crown

Solicitor ruled that the money could not be given to the Settlers' Committee since they were not the legal successors. It could only be given to a legally constituted Local Authority, or failing that returned to the residents.

The Settlers' Committee did, however, gain access to the records of the previous administration and so levied a rate which raised \$765.48 in 1965 (ibid p. 11). However in view of the fact that the rate was set at \$5 per house it should have raised considerably more than this. In addition they borrowed \$800 from the Chase Manhattan Bank and 'burned a heap' to provide surfacing material for the village streets. Smaller individual heaps were burned and some wooden bridges over the trenches were re-built. The Committee also continued to represent the villagers to central Government and to press for additional funds for the improvement of the village, but with no success. Thus they were, in effect, only able to maintain the most basic and elementary services from their own efforts, and were not conspicuously successful in bringing in additional resources from outside.

It was against this background that in 1970 the PNC Government announced that they were at last going to create a new Local Authority in the area, the Nouvelle Flanders-La Jalousie Local Authority. Most of the area was taken up by former estates which were now almost entirely agricultural land with very few residents. Thus Windsor Forest and La Jalousie provided 77.5% of the houses in the Authority's area, as Table 4/5 shows.

TABLE 4/5

Nouvelle Flanders/La Jalousie Local AuthorityAllocations

VILLAGE	HOUSELOTS		HOUSES		% LOTS OCCUPIED	CULTIVATION ACRES
	No	%	No	%		
La Union Nouvelle Flanders	27	3.62	26	3.64	96.3	310
Rotterdam	6	0.81	4	0.56	66.66	175
Haarlem & Mary	32	4.30	30	4.20	93.75	205
Wailers Delight	7	0.94	6	0.80	85.71	410
Ruimsig	90	12.08	95	13.29	105.56	552
Windsor Forest	397	53.29	380	53.15	95.72	570
La Jalousie	186	24.97	174	24.34	93.55	748
TOTAL	745	100	715	100	95.97	2970

Elections were held at the end of 1970, before I arrived, and were contested on party lines, with the PPP boycotting them as part of its stand against the way the PNC Government was abusing its powers. Thus the twelve PNC candidates, of whom ten came from Windsor Forest, were elected unopposed. The defunct Settlers' Committee, whose leaders had been PPP men, re-formed themselves into the Rate Payers Association (despite the fact that their main activity was to discourage people from paying their rates at all) and:

"They pointed out that they would continue to espouse their cause in order to carry out the wishes, hopes and aspirations of the people, regardless of the tyranny of the Local Authority."

(ibid p 40)

The saga of the relations between these two organisations is something that will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7.

STRATIFICATION

Mention has already been made, in Chapter 1, of the national stratification system, particularly that which emerged under colonialism, and now I wish to look at that which is found in the local community. One would expect that, for an Indian population, caste would be one of the main determinants of status, but one of the most striking effects of the Plantation Society is the extent to which this institution has been eroded (R.T. Smith & Jayawardena 1967).

Thus for the vast majority of the Indian population this characteristic has no significance beyond the religious context. The only exception to this are the Brahmins who are responsible for providing the priesthood for mainstream Hinduism, although, as has been mentioned, there are other variants of Hinduism such as the Aryans who challenge this dominance. For the remainder of the population caste tends to be used as an additional and vague characteristic to be added to other more conventional criteria of social assessment, such as wealth, education and occupation. Thus a successful shopkeeper referred proudly to his Ksatriya origins, as exemplified by his name, as an indication that he had resumed his 'natural' place in society. However he was careful only to say this jokingly in public. On the other hand several very poor families were pointed out to me as being 'well known' for having a Chamar background. The jati name Chamar was used to epitomise low caste status, whereas most of the time when talking about this subject people talked in terms of varnas.

It is doubtful if many people, especially the younger ones, had much idea of the structure of the caste system in India and little or

no idea of their own family's caste origins. Thus Chamar had become a term of abuse and denigration, likely to be used as an insult in a fierce argument, and to provoke a fight if so used. It was also used as a justification for low opinions of others expressed indirectly, and this was how Seeram expressed his dislike of Mahadeo the Arya Samaj priest. This use has racial overtones, with the Chamar's natural boorishness and lack of intelligence being contrasted, in this case, with the 'nobility' of feelings and sensitivity of one of Ksatriya background. Needless to say Mahadeo's supporters rejected this view utterly and had a completely different interpretation, based on Aryan ideas of personal worth determining respect.

In place of caste the Plantation Society had inculcated a different set of values, more in tune with those of the capitalist money economy. This experience also brought forth responses on the part of the labourers to the monolithic power of the plantations. Jayawardena, in particular, has explored this aspect of Indian society (1963) and has emphasised the egalitarian nature of the workers' ideology (1967), characterised by the term 'mati'. This is apparently derived from the English term 'mate' and meant:

"Associate, fellow being, or equal.....At its core is the tie between persons who share the same kind of life and fate.....To the extent that mati was recognised, behaviour was governed by norms of amity, respect and consideration for the interests and honour of one's fellow."

(Jayawardena 1967:417)

'Mati' is seen as an expression of lower class solidarity, with sanctions against those who broke this. Such deviant behaviour was talked of as 'eye-pass', in the sense of "you take you eye an' pass me", a failure to accord common equality, to 'do mati down'. Those who engaged in such behaviour would be the subject of a series of

sanctions ranging from abuse, fighting and litigation. Although Jayawardena has stressed the egalitarian nature of the concept of mati and the context of its emergence in the plantation environment, Wilson has pointed out that Jayawardena's evidence can be interpreted to allow the concept to incorporate some aspects of hierarchy (1969). Thus mati could be applied to situations where workers had essentially the same class and organisational status, but where there were recognised differences in ability, financial success and other achievements.

From this point of view mati becomes a concept which expresses an acceptance of common equality and solidarity despite such differences. It reflects the magnanimity of those who could exploit claims to superior status, but who do not choose to emphasise these. At the same time the basis of these claims is recognised by others, making it a reciprocal process of evaluation of status and esteem.

In the rice villages, by contrast, Smith found "a perpetual turmoil of attempts to demonstrate superiority" (1964:323). In large part this activity came from the changing fortunes of the rice industry in the post-war world and the possibility of utilising new sources of income for prestige expenditure. This entailed a move to better housing, investment items such as sewing machines and better furnishings (1964:319). There was also the possibility of engaging in community-based status competition for some. As Smith says of the 1956 situation:

"The really active element in these struggles is relatively small, but constitutes an important group from the economic point of view. Speaking very generally, one might say that its members are similar to the rest of the village population in educational background and culture, and differ principally in their greater economic prosperity and in the fact that they fill leadership roles in the many voluntary associations one finds in Indian villages."

(R.T.Smith 1964:323)

In this activity the factors that Smith considered important were, (1) wealth, (2) 'holy living' and (3) education (ibid).

(1) Wealth continues to be important as a source of deference, and with the changes of the preceding decade or so there had, by 1972, become more sources available to the community and more opportunities for its expression. Wealth tended to be signified by material possessions, of which housing was the most apparent, with mention having been made of the way in which, with one exception, all the houses in the village were now of wooden construction. The older prestige items of furniture, decorations and size, were still apparent but now there were additional ones of kerosene stoves or even gas ones run on butane bottles, as well as refrigerators, tape recorders and radios (there is no television in Guyana).

With the expansion of the central network some houses were beginning to be able to have telephones as well, although the most potent status symbol was the motor car. There were 6 hire cars in the village, and 18 private ones, mostly owned by local businessmen, who tended to use them in connection with their business, and better-paid clerical employees, who had them purely for personal use. When Mahadeo, the Arya Samaj priest and tractor operator who came from humble origins in the village, bought a second hand car to help him

with his religious activities it was widely felt that he was aspiring to something above his deserts and there was a good deal of adverse comment, which was not levelled against the business and clerical owners.

(2) 'Holy living' is a interesting source of status assertion and largely derives from the inability of the majority of rural residents to aspire to the kinds of status claims and criteria valued more widely in the society. Thus the group that Smith mentioned above as seeking to build on their new-found prosperity in the post-war rice boom were too poorly educated and not sufficiently affluent to contemplate entry into the national 'creole' bourgeois system. For although they may have been relatively more successful than their fellow villagers, they nevertheless remained unsophisticated peasants as far as the national status system was concerned.

In such a situation a turning to the resources of traditional Indian culture, and especially Hinduism, represented one possible source of status expression. Thus to move increasingly to a greater awareness of the tenets of the religion and to adopt a life-style that approximated more to its precepts was a way open to all Indians. This was particularly associated with the Arya Samaj, although the more conventional Hindu and Muslim groups also offered opportunities for this approach. That this should have been so widely used by rural Indians lacking the more conventional criteria for status in the creole and colonial social system is not surprising, though it was viewed with suspicion in the 1950s. Then it was perceived as an example of the potential threat of some kind of 'pan-Indianism' that was in danger of challenging the stability of the independent state

that was in the making (Robertson Cmnd 9274, 1954). However, as has been mentioned in Chapter 1, this was not some atavistic resurgence of Indian imperialism, but rather the response of an under-privileged ethnic group seeking to assert its claims to recognition in the context of Guyanese society that was commensurate with its numbers and new-found economic significance.

This source of status is still open to all villagers, for the round of religious activities provides plenty of scope for the aspiring to exhibit their knowledge and dedication to all. At popular religious gatherings held in people's houses, such as jandhis, kathas and weddings, it is usual to ask people present to 'say a few words on the occasion'. Many men have developed a great facility to offer impromptu speeches that are built round a religious theme and offer spiritual enlightenment and 'upliftment' to the company. They were accorded the status of religious experts and had the opportunity to become 'prominent' in the village by being invited to many functions and frequently called upon to speak. It is a fate that invariably befalls visiting researchers and their wives too!

Some of these men become known in neighbouring villages and are invited to religious functions there as well, especially if they can also offer some other religious skill such as the ability to sing bhajans (religious songs) or play the harmonium. On the other hand this kind of activity has its limitations, in that it is difficult for these men to add to their knowledge, so that they end up saying the same things over and over again. The most successful manage to dress the message up in different ways, but many do not. Similarly those who have a knowledge of Hindi are restricted in how far they can

display this, since very few of the company can follow what they are saying. The result of these limitations is that some men become religious bores and are listened to with respect but little enthusiasm. They then run the risk of going too far in haranguing the company on their religious short-comings and so alienating their sympathies. Often this serves only to strengthen the speaker's conviction of his own rectitude. Thus this source of status esteem is of limited utility in comparison with the other two.

(3) The final source of status mentioned by Smith, formal education, is the most interesting. Reference has already been made to the increase in the numbers of villagers who have benefitted from the greater provision of formal educational facilities. This in turn has led to a great increase in the range and number of permanent jobs in which villagers now engage. Most striking are the numbers of workers who are employed in prestigious clerical and professional occupations in Georgetown. As will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6 there are four senior civil servants in the village and neighbouring settlements, teachers, accounts staff, technical supervisors and several university students.

All of these people possess the kinds of status criteria that are valued in the wider society and which the kind of men Smith observed specifically lacked. They therefore had the ability to claim a superior status to the majority of the village inhabitants and to orient themselves to the national status system. There were a small number who felt superior and disliked both living in the village and their fellow villagers, but there were a surprisingly large number who did not. These people tended to take part in a wide range of village

activities, from religious functions to cricket, from domino teams to purely informal socialising. They had the reputation of 'moving well with the poeple', and this was often expressed as being one of the precepts that a wise man should follow.

In effect this is a version of mati. For the approach that my informants were advocating meant that the posessors of education, jobs and other prestigious characteristics were expected, nevertheless, to recognise the equality and common humanity of fellow villagers, no matter how poor and ill educated. Those who 'moved well' did precisely this, and in return were accorded the prestige associated with their qualifications and occupation.

Thus the 'bundle of deference entitlements' that Shils mentions (1968) would appear to explain this situation well. For here we have a category of villagers who have very 'portable' status criteria that would accord them deference throughout the society, who have the opportunity to operate these in their everyday work in the city and who could easily adopt a superior attitude to the village as a whole. On the other hand they have a local orientation and network of personal contacts which they operate in their leisure time in the village. Furthermore, the successful balancing of national status criteria and local evaluation acts as an additional stimulus for other village children to emulate their achievements and to reach their degree of sophistication and affluence.

Thus this is a case of the successful adaptation and inter-penetration of national values into the village community, so that the members are more directly involved in the operation of the

national system of status values than they were in 1956. Nevertheless this is not a case of a revolution in values or of the 'modernisation' of traditional Indian values to a new form. Rather I would argue that the national system was established and known in the community for a long time, but that the opportunity to be involved in it was relatively lacking, hence the turning to Indian culture as a resource. Now that the opportunities are more frequent and the members of the community have seized them with enthusiasm.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As this Chapter has shown, there have been substantial changes in the village since 1956, but they were not always of the kind expected by Smith. The most apparent difference concerns the population, especially the changed ethnic composition resulting from the departure of the Africans. Although the village did not experience the intense hostility that occurred elsewhere, it was nevertheless significantly affected by national events. This in turn has influenced the attitudes to Africans that the Indian villagers express, which becomes all the more relevant because of their increasing contact with Africans while working outside the village. It is this situation that provides the background to the expression of Indian ethnic identity.

In this regard the village is more 'Indian' than it was in 1956, for not only are the Indians numerically more dominant but the overt characteristics of Indian identity continue to be very apparent. Thus the patterns of Indian kinship, marriage and residence continue much as they were in 1956. Similarly religion is still very much an active force in the villagers' life, with a round of rituals that is at least as full as before. But in all these areas there have also been changes.

One of the most important in the long term is likely to be the recent indications of a decline in the birth rate and the apparent extra interest in family planning. That this should be happening among Indians, who have in recent times been the most fecund section of the population is most significant and could well indicate that the great growth period of the Guyanese population is over. Of comparable importance is the extent to which village children are participating in formal educational provision. This new involvement is reflected in both the numbers enrolled, especially at the secondary level, and in the number who have proceeded to post-secondary education, right up to university level. The outcome of this commitment can be seen in the new pattern of employment, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 5. In addition to the fact that increasing numbers of village youths now have desirable and relatively prestigious clerical jobs, it is also evident that an increasing number of them are women.

These changes and innovations can easily be seen as making the village more 'modern' as the residents become more involved with the creole world of work and the city. At the same time the facilities in the village have become more sophisticated and modern, with electricity, a tar road, improved water supply and better transport facilities being the most noticeable. Similarly, private houses have become more sturdy, bigger and better equipped, with kerosene stoves, sewing machines and radios being very common. The eagerness of villagers to acquire these conveniences, along with their demands for improved public facilities in the form of street lights, community and health centres and better roads, all indicate a clear orientation to the material benefits increasingly becoming available.

Even so, it would be too simplistic merely to interpret these as indicators of the 'modernity' of the village. Rather, the villagers' perceptions of them are often refracted through perceptions of ethnicity and politics. For increasingly the provision of employment which would allow the acquisition of private goods, in addition to the provision of communal ones, comes as a result of Government patronage. This is something that is very apparent in the recent history of the rice industry in the village, which is the subject of the next Chapter. In the meantime, we can see from the material presented in this Chapter that the 'Indianness' of Windsor Forest has not diminished, even though the social characteristics of the population have altered in significant ways. Thus, although the changes in the village have not been as Smith envisaged, they have nevertheless been real, and it is to an examination of how the most significant of them came about that I now turn.

CHAPTER FIVE

FARMING IN WINDSOR FOREST

- Introduction
- The Development of the Rice Industry
- Rice and Government Policy
- Production in Windsor Forest
- Milling
- Landholding
- Implications of Mechanisation
- The Economic Viability of Rice Farming
- Other Agricultural Activities
- Summary and Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

"The picture so far is of a village population engaged in rice cultivation and supplementing income from this source by casual wage labour, enjoying a gradually rising standard of living with increasing consumption expectations but displaying no signs of marked change in productive resources."

(R.T.Smith 1964:322)

The aim of this Chapter is to review the main developments in the agricultural activities of the village since the time of Smith's study in 1956. The principal activity of the village at that time was the cultivation of rice and so the analysis will be mainly concerned with this area of activity. Furthermore there have been considerable changes in the nature of rice cultivation in the area during this time and this in turn has had a number of significant consequences for the community as a whole and the whole range of economic activities in which members of the village engage.

The central argument of the chapter is that the community responded to the incentives that were offered to the rice industry in the 1950s, as had been noted by Smith, and went on to embrace the movement to mechanised cultivation that was strongly at work in the country. This in turn has had a number of significant effects on the residents, for the move to mechanisation was done in a most uneconomic way and the consequences of this have begun to emerge over the preceding years. In particular the move to mechanised cultivation had the effect of displacing labour from the production of rice and putting them onto the general job market. Furthermore this was happening at a time when the general labour market was also having to absorb the result of the displacement of labour from the sugar estates. That process combined with the uneconomic nature of rice cultivation under

the new system has led to a considerable move to forms of employment out of the community, and will be discussed in the next chapter.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RICE INDUSTRY

Rice has been grown in Guyana since the Eighteenth Century (R.T. Smith 1957:502) but since the latter part of the last century has been seen almost exclusively as an Indian crop. There is evidence that estates grew rice on their own account - as was mentioned in Chapter 1 the manager of Windsor Forest did this. There is also evidence that they were increasingly obliged to extend this facility to labourers at the end of the Nineteenth Century as the sugar depression bit deeply and estates were anxious about maintaining their supplies of labour until things improved (Adamson 1972 Mandle 1973 Potter 1970). At this time the 'industry' tended to consist of estate labourers eking out their incomes with the selling of rice in a casual way in the local communities. Nevertheless the industry was increasingly meeting the needs of the residents of the country and from 1918 (Nath 1970:111) the country became self-sufficient in rice.

After this the export of rice became an increasingly significant activity, though initially on a small scale. At this time it was handled by merchants in Georgetown who were already involved in the import and export of foodstuffs, such as the trading house established by Boodhoo from Windsor Forest as a result of his good fortune at the time of the closing of the estate. The first major fillip that the industry received was the effect of the cessation of supplies from elsewhere produced by the First World War. Prior to that, the majority of West Indian colonies recieved their rice supply from the Far East, mainly Burma and Thailand, at prices that Guyana could not match.

With the cessation of supplies the opportunities that faced exporters in the colony were huge, and many responded to them, with the result that local prices shot up and produced a local scarcity, which in turn led to the Governor banning the export of rice for the remainder of the emergency (Nath 1970:112).

After the war the shortages remained for a time, but in the 1920s the supplies from the Far East were resumed and the local industry went into a severe decline. Indeed it was not until 1951 that the previous peak price of 1920 was equalled (ibid). The period between the two wars was one of relative stagnation, with little export potential and a commitment to the satisfaction of national needs being the main force of the industry's activities. This was also the time during which the traditional system of cultivation was established in Windsor Forest and described by Huggins (1941).

The next big fillip that the industry received was at the time of the Second World War, when once again the supplies to the region from the Far East were cut off. This time, however, the industry was fortunate enough to avoid the problem of 'boom and bust' that had characterised the earlier experience and the way that the industry met the new demands put on it was very much more carefully organised. The mechanisms for achieving this were twofold, with the first one being the Rice Marketing Board (RMB). This had initially been established in 1922 to stimulate the production of rice and to encourage improved distribution. However it seems to have achieved little and in 1939 it was replaced by a statutory body with representatives of producers, millers, traders and Government, with the new responsibility to maintain uniformity of price and quality. This, in effect,

represented the beginning of the role of the RMB as the main mechanism for the control of the rice industry, for its position has become strengthened to being that of the sole purchaser of rice in the country, as well as being the regulator of the export trade, which has become the primary concern of the industry.

The other means by which the industry sought to meet the needs of the hour was the implementation of mechanised cultivation. This was done initially at a site called the Mahaicony-Abary Rice Development Scheme (MARDS) on the East Coast of Demerara, which continues to be the site of the main Government effort in rice. During the Second World War experiments were made on the 11,000 acres there and as the Drainage and Irrigation Sub-Committee of the Legislative Council later said "Government was instructed to get ahead with Rice Expansion works regardless of expense" (Legislative Council Papers No 11, 1948, p 111) Furthermore the activities there were meant to have a 'demonstration effect' on farmers, and that indeed seems to have worked, even if it can be claimed that very little else did. For the mechanisation of cultivation at MARDS was carried out with only the aim of increased production in mind and without the careful consideration of the overall problems of the application of mechanisation to Guyana that was required if the practice was to be extended to the rest of the country. Furthermore the milling activities established at MARDS appear to have signally failed to effect the reform of milling practice called for by Parker (1939). The post-war period was characterised by a continual wrangle about what to do with the central Government facilities like MARDS. In 1952 it was transformed into the Rice Development Company (RDC), though as Smith says "It has done good work of an experimental nature, and has provided some services such as

machinery hire and milling facilities to farmers in the area. As a commercial venture it has been a total failure" (1962:64).

With the ending of hostilities the Guyanese rice industry faced the same situation that had occurred at the end of the previous war, but in this case it was fortunate enough to avoid the threat. The main reason was that the supplies from the Far East were not resumed on this occasion and so Guyana was able to continue in her role as principal supplier of rice to the West Indies. Furthermore this position was enshrined in a number of Rice Agreements negotiated under the aegis of Britain as the colonial power, which in effect guaranteed Guyana as the principal supplier of rice to the region (Nath 1970:112). As Kundu points out, "by agreements with the importing territories of the British Caribbean islands, British Guiana operated in an assured market of rice from before 1950; and from 1957 onwards British Guiana has enjoyed a virtual monopoly of exporting rice to the islands" (1964:257). Later, as the world rice industry recovered from the effects of the war and was better able to meet the needs of the West Indian market, the interests of Guyana were again protected. First there was the abortive move towards the creation of the West Indies Federation in the 1950s, which resulted in the agreement that the rice supplies of the region should be met from within the region (ibid). Later there came the creation of the various trading agreements, such as CARIFTA and CARICOM, which further protected the Guyanese industry from competition from outside the region.

During the war the output of the industry had almost doubled (Nath 1970:256) and apart from that from the MARDS development the remainder had been produced by traditional methods. With the continued security

of the West Indian market the need, therefore, was to ensure that production could meet the demands of this market. The emphasis, therefore, was on the need to increase and sustain production, and Government policy was oriented towards this end.

There had been for some considerable time a series of suggestions about the most effective way to improve the agricultural output of Guyana's coastland by improving the drainage and irrigation, which had always been seen as the key to efficient farming on the coast. In particular the proposals of F.H. Hutchinson as a resident expert had been widely discussed and later became incorporated into the proposals of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (1952; Mandle 1973:127). These entailed the construction of large scale drainage and irrigation schemes that would release thousands of acres of land for cultivation, and these formed the basis of not only much of the post-war investment in agriculture, but also for some of the works that still remain in the planning pipeline.

Work on these schemes started in the Ten Year Plan for Development and Welfare 1947-56, particularly on the Corantyne Drainage and Irrigation Project, which included the Black Bush Polder scheme, which came to feature so prominently in the agricultural and political life of the country in the next decade. Black Bush contained over 30,000 acres, of which 27,000 were to be devoted to rice and came into full operation in the early 1960s

Another project which got underway as part of the same programme was the Boeraserie Project which entailed building a large back dam in West Demerara to control the water supply for the whole area between

the Demerara and Essequibo rivers. This released 26,000 acres for rice land, as well as providing improved water supply facilities for the sugar estates. The rice land is rather peaty or pegasse and so is not so productive, but nevertheless several farmers from Windsor Forest now plant in the area released, about twelve miles distant from the village. Furthermore the main rice areas of the village and neighbouring rice areas all benefitted from the improved water control facilities that the Project offered.

In addition there were several other large development schemes that came into operation during the 1950s and 1960s as a result of Government policy to encourage the development of the rice industry. The main ones of these were Tapacuma (30,000 acres), Vergenoegen (2,000 acres), Mara (1,400 rice acres) and Garden of Eden (1,200 rice acres). Most of these were drainage and irrigation projects that basically provided improved facilities for the farmers of the area, whereas Black Bush was a full settlement scheme which entailed the provision of a considerable range of additional facilities.

During the 1950s the acreage under rice doubled to meet the opportunities of the new situation (see Appendix 2), but the role of the Government in this was only partial at this stage, since less than half of this land was made available as a direct result of Government policy. The majority of the land that became available for rice cultivation during this time was as a result of private initiative. The contribution of this was recognised when in 1959 Kenneth Berrill, the Jagan Government's economic advisor, admitted that this expansion "shows how acreage has expanded before the fruition of big drainage and irrigation schemes and without much assistance from government

land settlement schemes". This rate of activity could be explained on by "the response of the small farmers to favourable conditions, i.e., a secure market, a crop in which he is traditionally skilled, and a crop where he gets his money back quickly." (Legislative Council Papers No.5, 1959, p 10). Much of this expansion took place on relatively marginal land that was not well drained and which had previously been used as cattle pasture. This frequently meant that the land could only grow rice if the rainfall was adequate and on time, which could not always be guaranteed, and so the return from this land was often varied and unreliable. This in turn posed problems for the RMB which had to rely on such land to help fulfill the quotas it had undertaken with overseas customers. Furthermore there were a number of production problems that were specific to this type of land and which became more apparent as the decade progressed.

RICE AND GOVERNMENT POLICY

Nevertheless the Government did offer a considerable amount of assistance to the rice industry during this era. This is particularly so of the two administrations of the PPP from 1957 to 1964. When they returned to office in 1957 after the interregnum of direct administration they inherited a development budget of \$91 million, which they increased to \$102.5 million. They also increased the proportion which was allocated to agriculture from 27.5% to 33%. Furthermore, when the plan was prematurely superseded in 1959, of the money actually expended to that date, some 42.8% had in fact gone to agriculture, mainly rice farming (Despres 1967:245).

The assistance to farmers took a number of forms. From the early 1950s the RMB had operated a scheme whereby they guaranteed the loans

that the importers made to farmers for the purchase of equipment. With such a favourable market it is perhaps not surprising that by 1954 the Director of Agriculture was reporting that "there were indications that some districts were over-mechanised in regard to available acreage and the ability of farmers to pay for tractors purchased on the hire-purchase plan" (quoted in Kundu 1964:268). The scheme was discontinued.

Nevertheless the importation of machines continued apace, as Table 5/1 shows, with over 350 machines per year being imported during the 1950s, with a peak of 777 in 1960 alone.

TABLE 5-1
IMPORTATION OF TRACTORS & COMBINES INTO GUYANA

Year	Tractors	Combines
1953	251	20
1954	331	24
1955	175	5
1956	252	16
1957	344	29
1958	396	11
1959	390	21
1960	777	128
1961	783	74
1962	212	35
1963	416	47
1964	448	46
1965	232	40
1966	269	27
1967	229	27
1968	341	-

Source: Kundu 1964, Table 13 p.267
Department of Customs & Excise

Combine harvesters too were entering the country at a greater rate, with a yearly average of 30, although 1960 again peaked with 128 coming in, more than four times the previous highest annual total.

The degree of Government support for mechanisation at this time can be gauged by the statement made to the Legislative Council by the Governor:

"There have been considerable developments in the Government's six land settlement schemes which during 1949 produced some 413,000 bags of padi. This figure might have been 500,000 had the necessary mechanical equipment, which is only now being supplied, been available earlier."

(Legislative Council Papers No. 3, 1950, p 6)

In 1965 Caffey and Efferson estimated that there were approximately 3,000 tractors farming some 240,000 acres, which gives the not unreasonable figure of one tractor to eighty acres (Caffey & Efferson 1965:5). However, as the evidence from Windsor Forest will show, this pattern was not found in all areas. Rather there were considerable imbalances. In addition the Government was also offering duty-free petrol for such machines involved in land cultivation and harvesting. Whilst the scheme ran, from 1954 until 1960, the rice industry received the lion's share throughout, rising from 70% in 1954 to 87% in 1960, which represented nearly 600,000 gallons by then (ibid and Annual Reports of the Director of Agriculture 1954-60).

The British Guiana Development Programme 1960-64, drawn up by Mr. Kenneth Berrill, laid quite explicit emphasis on the expansion of the rice industry as a major component of the Programme:

"The feature that needs comment here is that the expansion of farming in British Guiana in the next five years is heavily dependent on the expansion of rice acreage."

(Report of the British Guiana Development Programme 1960-64, Sessional Paper No.2, 1964)

Much of the expansion during this period was destined to be as a

result of the land development schemes mentioned above, of which the most significant was Black Bush Polder on the Corantyne. This scheme of more than 30,000 acres was intended to contain three communities of some 1,586 families, each of whom was to be allocated 15 acres for rice and 2 acres for a house lot and ground provisions. The total cost was originally estimated at approximately \$18.67 million, or some \$11,800 per family (Despres 1967:247), although the final cost is, inevitably, reputed to be much higher than this.

The scheme was intended to provide land for experienced farmers who needed to expand their activities, but who could not do so in the areas in which they were living. However, Despres describes how during his fieldwork the operation was turned into a political exercise, with the PPP taking five of the seven seats on the selection committee and using the scheme as a system of political patronage for loyal party supporters, who were overwhelmingly Indian. Of the 3,300 applications received at the time, less than 200 were from Afro-Guyanese, with the result that only 3 of the 150 families settled at that time were from this section of the society (ibid:248). The pattern continued in later years and the subject became a matter of major political controversy, passing into the nation's political folklore.

Newman saw this kind of abuse arising from the lack of appropriate skills and technical resources available to the Government. For him the Development Programme

"was more a loose collection of assorted Government projects, many of them concerned with drainage and irrigation to benefit paddy lands, than a coherent economic plan in the modern sense of the term, i.e. a plan embracing the private sector as well, with a clearly defined set of targets based on a long-run perspective"

(Newman 1964:69)

The Government also offered assistance to the farmer on private land during this time, particularly with the implementation of the Rice Farmers Security of Tenure Ordinance, which set a scale of appropriate rentals, a specified profit margin and established an Assessment Committee to oversee this. There were in addition an improved Agricultural Extension Service, improved credit through co-operatives and machinery hire pools run by the RMB and the Rice Producers Association (RPA). This latter body had been established in 1946 and was now to receive a subsidy from the RMB, on whose Board it was allocated half of the places. In 1960 the number was increased to eleven out of sixteen and so the industry was effectively in the hands of the producers for the first time. However the RPA has long been dominated by the PPP who contested the elections on a party ticket from 1957 onwards and with the change in government in 1964 the activities of the RPA were severely curtailed.

However one of the main areas of Government support was in the level of prices that were paid to farmers for their rice and padi. As has been mentioned, the primary concern in the immediate post-war era was to ensure adequate supplies of rice to meet the demands of the market, though very soon the attention of the Rice Conferences moved on to the problem of increasing prices, with the result that: "the proceedings of the Conferences have been strewn with vehement arguments between British Guiana and the British Caribbean Islands about the fixing of price" (Kundu 1964:263). Despite this acrimony the efforts of the Guyanese authorities were generally successful, for the prices paid to farmers doubled during the 1950s (Nath 1970:257). In part this was possible because the RMB chose to pass on to the farmers as much of the benefit from increased prices as possible, which led

the Director of Agriculture to protest that this policy left the RMB with a dangerously low reserve fund (Rennison Committee Report, Appendix A 1958). Furthermore the PPP Government was able to negotiate a very favourable deal with Cuba in 1961 that entailed the export of some 30,000 tons of rice annually, approximately one third of the national output at the time. In addition the price paid for this was substantially higher than that paid by other territories. It is therefore not surprising that the time of the Cuba market is talked of as some kind of 'golden age' of local rice farming.

In some ways this was too good to last, and when the PPP lost power in 1964 the Cuban market was abruptly cancelled by the new PNC government, which resulted in a loss of over \$4 million by the RMB. As a result of this the Government invited two experts from the USA to investigate, and amongst other things they reported that:

"For the average grade, No. 1, the support price was BWI\$9.00 per 100-pound bag in 1950, was increased to BWI\$16.00 in 1955, further increased to BWI\$17.60 in 1960, and has been maintained at BWI\$18.95 in 1964 and 1965#...At this support level, British Guiana rice is being supported at the same level as United States rice of much higher quality and from 20 to 25 per cent above the world price level for rice of equivalent quality."

(Caffrey & Efferson 1965:7)

In many ways this characterises the degree of support which the post-war Governments of Guyana gave to the rice industry, and whilst much of this was implemented during the PPP regimes, there was still a good deal of assistance given both before the first popularly elected Government of 1953 and during the years of the suspended constitution.

It is easy to see Jagan and the PPP as simply rewarding their Indian supporters in the rural areas in this way, and that is how the

process is often portrayed (Despres 1967) and talked about in Guyana (Mandale 1973:138). Alternatively it is possible to see this process in a different light, with Jagan and the PPP still remembering the effects of the overthrow of the constitution and the consequences of seeking to move too precipitately against the colonial power. In such a situation the development of the rice industry provided a means of reforming the dominance of the sugar industry in the country without a frontal assault.

The heated debate between Newman (1960) and Berrill (1961) over the nature of the kind of development programme that the country needed brought out sharply the realities of the planning process under the constraints of the colonial regime. Newman emphasised the traditions of the Plantation Society and the inability of the nationalists to break out of the mould of this because of their lack of the appropriate resources. He saw this in turn as having serious consequences for the country's development in the future:

"Given a lack of any kind of economic planning staff, and a dearth of skilled agricultural and industrial engineers who could examine projects carefully, there was a natural tendency to concentrate on those projects of irrigation and drainage for rice which had been on the drawing board for several years. Almost no attempt seems to have been made to go into the economic feasibility of the rice schemes, or very seriously into the possibilities of diversification into other crops which might yield a higher income, and so help to recoup the cost of investment."

(Newman 1964:70)

Berrill, on the other hand, whilst acknowledging the problems of organising a development plan for a country which had the Gross National Product of a "minor British county" (1961:2), nevertheless chose to bring out the very real constraints that were imposed on the Jagan administration by the British Government, who made it clear that

they were simply not willing to allocate any more funds for the development of Guyana (ibid:3). Given Jagan's well known unwillingness to bow to the political susceptibilities of the Western powers (Schlesinger 1965:713), the prospect of obtaining alternative sources of funding were not good. Hence the Development Programme was forced to operate within the realities of the Guyanese economy, which in effect meant the expansion of rice.

In addition there was the advantage of doing something for the rural population, who were undoubtedly the most deprived section of the population. This action had become even more necessary during the 1950s for the sugar industry had been engaged in an ambitious programme of mechanisation and modernisation of their production facilities. This in turn had resulted in the displacement of a considerable number of sugar workers onto the rural labour market (Ruebens & Ruebens 1962). Furthermore it had occurred at a time at which the rural population was booming as a result of the public health measures implemented during the war, mainly the eradication of malaria (Newman 1964:33).

Mandle has argued (1973:134) that the mechanisation programme of the sugar industry was done for largely strategic purposes connected with the problems of maintaining a sufficiently co-operative labour supply and was done without any consideration of the effects of this action on the employment market. Certainly it posed a major problem for the Government and it can be argued that the expansion of the rice industry was justified on the basis of its capacity to absorb the surplus labour from the estates. However this was largely dependent on production being labour-intensive, and the International Bank for

Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) Report of 1953 indeed concluded that the rice industry had absorbed most of the excess of manpower resulting from population growth and the rationalisation of the sugar industry (Smith 1957:502). Kundu has also stressed the importance of this rôle, even as late as the mid 1960s:

"The expansion of the rice industry in British Guiana, even in the face of high cost of cultivation, inefficient milling and very low profit margin, is vital for the economy, since the industry, because of its labour-intensive nature, can provide considerable employment."

(Kundu 1964:279)

However the move to mechanisation that was apparent throughout the 1950s and 1960s reduced that capacity considerably.

PRODUCTION IN WINDSOR FOREST

As was mentioned in Chapter3 the system of production in Windsor Forest at this time was the traditional one for the Guyanese rice industry. That meant that it was based on intensive cultivation using draught animals and a large amount of human labour. Under this system the land was ploughed using oxen and a simple plough similar to that used in India and throughout the Third World. This was followed by the planting of a seedling nursery on the edge of the rice plot. Once this had developed the best seedlings were transplanted evenly throughout the main plot, usually by female labour.

The field was then irrigated and maintained until the crop was ripe, when the plot was drained and the harvest begun. This was the most labour intensive part of the process, since it was a race against time to bring in the harvest before the dry season ended. Harvesting was done by cutting the padi with a hand grass knife, tying the plants

into bundles and transporting them to the edge of the field on a sled pulled by oxen. There a kharian or flat smooth area had been prepared with a post in the centre. The padi was heaped round it, the bulls yoked to the post in parallel, and made to walk round and round on the padi. This had the effect of threshing the ears of grain from the stalks without causing much damage to the former. The straw was removed and the grain bagged and removed to the nearest trench where it was collected in the boat of the miller in whose mill it was to be processed and transported there. The millers provided the boats and the bulls to pull them.

This system was very labour intensive and Smith estimated that it took 38 man-days to cultivate one acre (1957:509). It entailed the use of large amounts of family labour at key times and all the members of the household would be required to assist with transplanting and especially harvesting, with the result that children were usually kept away from school at such times (1957:507). The Government Estates were fortunate in one respect, in that they were one of the few areas in the country that was able to produce two good crops per year. Nationally 90% of the rice produced came from the 'big' or Autumn crop, with the remainder coming from the Spring one. In some areas this was known as the 'catch' crop as farmers simply harvested the dropped grain from the main crop that has sprouted naturally. In Windsor Forest, on the other hand, the crop was fully planted just like the main one, though the yield was lower since the growing period was shorter. Thus the labour demands for this year-round cultivation were considerable.

By 1972 the situation had changed considerably. Now the production

process was almost fully mechanised and the farmers were in the midst of moving over to newer varieties of rice that required different production techniques. The rate of acquisition of tractors increased sharply soon after Smith had reported only seven in the village in 1956 (1957:510). In 1972 there were now 75 tractors in the whole village, a more than tenfold increase since Smith's time. Of these 74 were owned by Indians and one by a Chinese farmer. On the other hand the area of rice that the members of the village cultivated had not increased greatly, having gone up from 1470 acres to 1672 acres, a rise of 13.7%. Almost all of this was planted by Indians, for although there were 3 Chinese farmers in the village, they only planted 16 acres. In addition there were the large land holdings of 126 acres held by the Sue A Quan family, which had been inherited from the early days of the estate, but the owners were now elderly and merely rented the land out to Indian farmers. Thus for all practical purposes the rice farmers of Windsor Forest were Indians.

The increase in the number of tractors in the village had been balanced by a decline in the number of oxen or bulls required for the preparation of the land. Whereas an agricultural survey had revealed 472 such animals in Windsor Forest in 1953, (Smith 1957:510), by 1972 their numbers had declined to a mere 14. Thus the cultivation of rice in the area was now entirely dependent on machines, since there were no longer enough animals around to substitute for them. This irrevocable move to mechanised cultivation was sealed in the late 1960s when the land at the back of Windsor Forest and La Jalousie that had traditionally been used for the pasturing of oxen was re-allocated to a cane co-operative and used for the growing of cane and ground provisions. The change was justified as follows:

"The tendency at Government Estates is to utilise the backland pastures for the cultivation of sugar cane and ground provisions. There is no need now for the use of this area as a pasture for steers, as machines have long since replaced steers for the preparation of padi fields."

(Annual Report of the Ministry of Agriculture 1970, p 32)

In 1950 Smith reported that the farmers who owned tractors tended to use them as substitute animals, even to the extent of employing them to thresh the padi by driving round and round on the kharian just as was done with bulls (1957:511). This is a surprisingly effective way of threshing and is still used today in some circumstances. Nevertheless the process of mechanisation started to encroach on this area too, for the application of mechanised reaping, in the form of the combine harvester, was underway. The importation of combines continued throughout the 1950s (Kundu 1964:267; see Table 5/1 above), reaching a peak in 1960 with 120 machines entering the country. Smith reported that one large farmer in Windsor Forest had such a machine in 1956, though he used it on his large block of land outside the village (1957:511). During the 1960s others were obtained, with the first one coming in 1960. Now there are six of them, though this is a rather unrealistic figure since these include the three that one man owns as a business and which he works up and down the coast over a large area. The others are used in the local area solely, with the large farmer of 1956 having a replacement machine that he still uses mainly on his own land. The ones that are most readily available to local farmers belong to the largest miller in the village and a substantial farmer who has acquired a combine as an additional business activity.

The dominance of this form of reaping is almost total in the area, with 86.5% of farmers reporting that they used this method. Of the

remaining 13.5% only 0.1% claimed to reap by hand by choice. The remainder who are forced to reap by hand do so because the combines cannot reach their lands, either because of lack of bridges over the irrigation trenches or lack of paths. Even so the access has to be very poor for the drivers to give up and it is amazing where they manage to get these bulky machines.

The machines are basically the same as those used in Europe and North America for grain reaping, with the exception that they have crawler tracks rather than tyred wheels at the front. The machines used off the large Government schemes are also set up to bag the grain directly from the machine, rather than the optional systems of either storing it in a large hopper or pumping it directly into a following trailer, both of which systems are more suitable to large-scale operations. The grain is bagged on an upper platform by two operatives, usually the farmer and a helper, and the bags slid down a chute to lie on the ground. The straw is dumped out of the rear of the machine to lie in long lines in the field.

After reaping is complete the bags of grain, which weigh approximately 180 lbs each, have to be 'dragged' to the edge of the field ready for transporting to the mill. This is usually done by fixing a small platform to the back of a tractor onto which several bags can be loaded at a time. If the farmer does not have his own tractor this service will be provided by the miller. As under the traditional system the transportation of the padi to the mill is also the responsibility of the miller, though nowadays this is done by tractor and trailer. Trailers are much less common than tractors and only 17 farmers had them, for apart from the expense of purchase it is

also necessary to have a separate licence for a trailer, which is a point of continual irritation to farmers since it means that trailers cannot be loaned to other tractor owners. However, even those who do own their own trailers do not transport their padi to the mill.

The implementation of mechanised cultivation also affected other areas of traditional practices. Although it was not strictly necessary to change the system of transplanting seedlings that had traditionally been utilised, it was nevertheless felt to be more convenient to do so with the move to tractor ploughing. This meant that the nursery plot was no longer sown, but rather the farmers converted to the jarai method of broadcasting germinated seed. Under this method the land is ploughed in the dry and the subsoil allowed to dry out, which is beneficial for supporting the weight of machines without their bogging down. When the rains come the land is ploughed in the wet to break up the top levels of the soil. Then the field is 'ramped' by driving the tractor round and round in the flooded field to produce a smooth slurry of liquid mud. The mud is then 'raked' by using a large plank studded with long nails on which one or two men are towed behind the tractor, which is an exact transfer of the practice used with animal cultivation. Following this a bag full of grass is towed round the field attached to the rake to make the routes of the field drains required to drain the land prior to harvesting.

Whilst this is taking place the bags of selected seed are prepared. For some time the RMB and before it the Board of Agriculture has been trying to encourage farmers to use 'pure line' seed of guaranteed purity, though without marked success. Usually farmers simply kept back a number of bags of padi to use for seed for the next crop,

though often specially reaped by hand to ensure that the best seed was used. With the new varieties coming into use the seed was obtained from official stocks and thus pure, but now the traditional practices are being applied here too and farmers were keeping back padi for seed. The seed is germinated by soaking it in water for 24 hours and then compressing it under heavy objects for a further 36 hours, by which time it has started to shoot. It is then broadcast in the soft mud of the field resulting from the process of raking.

The seed is allowed to take root in the mud for 7-10 days and once the shoots are established the irrigation water is brought back and the field remains flooded for the rest of the growing period. The irrigation water is supplied by the Drainage and Irrigation Board on a 'time run' system by which different areas are allocated water at different times and the Board employs a number of rangers in the area to operate the kokers or sluices to control this. Before the water is due to come in to his land the farmer will open his 'cut' to the drainage trench and the water will start to drain off from his land, ready to receive the fresh water coming in at the other side. The water is provided every week depending on the state of supplies in the conservancy in the hinterland.

As the plants begin to grow the farmer has to be sure that they are evenly distributed over the plot and if there are large areas that have not taken he will have to drain the field and re-broadcast. More commonly he will find that the growth is uneven, with some parts densely packed and others too thin. If this is so he will then 'patch' by hand, taking plants from the dense areas and putting them in the thin ones, as with transplanting. After that the amount of

time he has to spend on his plot can vary considerably, usually depending on whether he suffers any misfortunes or not. The most common problem is a breach of the thin bank surrounding the plot, which results in the water draining out, and if this happens at a time when more water is not due it can be a severe problem. However farmers who suffer such sudden problems can usually rely on any other farmer who spots this taking immediate action to block the breach.

Most other problems take longer to show, such as weed infestation. Traditionally this was combatted by pulling them out by hand, and some farmers still do this. Most find it too much trouble for the improved yield and prefer either to leave the weeds or use weedicide chemicals that can be applied with a spray. These are one of the items of equipment that were provided cheaply in the past and 20 farmers in the village have them and usually loan them out to others. More serious is insect attack, which can also come suddenly. This can seriously damage the crop and reduce its value drastically, so that farmers act quickly on this, again using chemicals and sprays.

Some farmers visit their plots almost daily, though usually only if they are near to the village. Those that are further away (and even lands in Windsor Forest or La Jalousie can be several miles from the farmer's house) are visited once or twice a week. Even so there are quite a number of farmers who only visit their fields even less frequently, largely because they have full time jobs that prevent them from getting into the backdam very often. They tend to rely on neighbouring farmers to report problems and to either tackle them when they come home from work or to wait until the weekend. This approach often means that the best husbandry practices cannot be followed and

that the yields from such plots are often not of the best. Even so it can be an effective method of cultivation and is becoming more common.

As was mentioned in Chapter 3, the traditional varieties grown in the area are unsatisfactory in a number of ways. The main problem is that they are derived from varieties such as Lajia and D110 which, although robust, are not very suitable for mechanised cultivation. Similarly, they do not respond well to fertiliser, so that it is difficult to increase their yield, and finally, they do not mill well and cannot be turned into white rice. In fact their one great advantage is that they grow easily, though even this characteristic has its disadvantages, since they are 'season bound' varieties. This means that their growth is determined by the amount of sunlight available during the day, with the plant ripening as the long sunny spells of the dry season arrive. Needless to say, any imperfection in the timing of the season results in a deterioration of the crop.

Increasingly the RMB and the GRC have been trying to encourage farmers to grow newer varieties that are more suitable, not only for mechanised cultivation, but also for milling into the more profitable white rice. These are the result of modern plant breeding experiments and are 'period bound', in that they ripen in 110-120 days irrespective of the weather. They also have short stiff stems suitable for mechanised cultivation, much less leaf growth and, most importantly, can be milled into white rice with no difficulty. Thus these varieties, firstly Bluebelle and latterly Starbonnet, both of American origin, were given extensive official support.

In addition the need for high quality milling capability was

recognised as long ago as 1939 when Parker's report on rice milling was so critical of the poor performance of this sector of the industry. The post-war situation saw the emergence of demand for higher quality, especially in the more affluent islands such as Jamaica. As Kundu reported "the taste for packaged high-quality rice in the export market is predominant" (1964:263). The sale of packaged white rice is very much more profitable than the bulk brown rice that Guyana has traditionally exported, and the RMB has for some time sought to exploit this market. However the problem has usually been to find a variety that was capable of producing the right quality of grain, and then milling it successfully.

The problem appeared to have been met in the case of Starbonnet and the RMB offered a significant premium of \$2 per bag for such rice. However the acceptance of the variety was not smooth at first, and the reasons for this are instructive. Firstly there were strong suspicions that this could be another flash in the pan like Bluebelle and tales of those who had lost money on this variety were well known. The greatest disadvantage as far as Windsor Forest farmers were concerned was that the new varieties required a considerable amount of fertiliser for their successful cultivation.

For unlike the traditional varieties, Starbonnet responded well to fertilisers and really needed them to produce to anything like its full potential. These were expensive with Urea costing \$11.25 per bag and Triple Super Phosphate \$10.75 per bag. Each acre required 1 cwt of Urea and 1/2 cwt of TSP, which represented a considerable outlay for the farmer. The GRC provided subsidised fertilisers through the Rice Action Committees (RACs), but the use of these facilities had

political overtones which some found unacceptable, as well as being rather inefficient, with the result that many farmers bought fertilisers at commercial rates from stockists along the coast. Even so farmers were not used to using these and frequently sought to save money by not applying the right amount, which led to dismal results. Gradually the message percolated that the specified amounts really were required and most farmers planting this variety did try to keep to them.

Another problem with Starbonnet is that it requires very careful water control during its growing period. This is a problem for the rest of the country in that there are many areas that are not suitable for this variety. This did not apply to those farmers with land in the Government Estates or the good private lands, but there were some areas near Windsor Forest, on which local farmers planted, which were not suitable because of poor drainage maintainance. However the greatest source of dissatisfaction as far as local farmers were concerned was that the yield of Starbonnet was disappointing. Official projections spoke of 20 to 24 bags of padi per acre (180lbs) and there was a considerable amount of publicity via handouts, press reports and radio items about farmers who had achieved this level of output. There was also a good deal of interest in reports on how the variety had done on the extensive Government lands in MARDS. Nevertheless local farmers usually got returns of around 14 bags per acre, with occasionally 16, but often as low as 8 or 9 for those who did not add enough fertiliser or who had made other cultivation mistakes. The result was a continuing and active discussion amongst farmers about whether it could 'compensate' to plant Starbonnet.

This evaluation was considerably complicated by the arrival in the country of a rice geneticist under the aegis of FAO. Dr. Pawar was an Indian who set about an extensive programme of breeding at the government School of Agriculture. Utilising varieties obtained from all over the world he was able to produce a number of possible competitors for Starbonnet. These were offered to farmers for field trials in 1971 and some of the results were very striking, with yields of up to 40 bags per acre being reported. News of these varieties spread very rapidly and farmers showed a keen interest in them, with the result that there were demands from all over the country for such seed.

Windsor Forest took what appeared to be a lead in this activity, for the father-in-law of Dr. Pawar's driver lived in the village and was offered some of the new seed, which grew well and further enhanced the reputation of the new varieties, which were known as 'hybrids', often corrupted in the local patois to 'high-breds'. For the next crop Rup, who was a large farmer in the area, through his contacts in the Corantyne managed to obtain a large supply of hybrid padi which he brought to the area and sold off to farmers as seed. This kind of activity was common and it was claimed that many of the original trial farmers never milled any of their padi, since it was all sold as seed to others. Rup was also a leading member of the Rate Payers Association, who were the main political opponents of Nan, the chairman of the Local Authority. In addition Nan was chairman of the local Rice Action Committee and so identified with the Government not only as far as party political affiliation was concerned but also in terms of their rice programme. Thus the deliberate flouting of the Starbonnet emphasis in favour of the unofficial hybrids was also a political act.

The Government response was to refuse, through the RMB, to accept the hybrids as white rice and so eligible for the high premium price. The argument was that the milling capability of the varieties had not been fully assessed and that there were doubts about the suitability of the hybrids for this programme. The farmers had few doubts and there was a lengthy campaign of political accusation and acrimony conducted in the press, especially in the opposition PPP's own newspaper. The farmers of Windsor Forest continued to experiment with the hybrids, planting different versions, planting both them and Starbonnet to determine the comparative performance and assessing which would 'compensate'. The yields of the hybrids continued to be impressive, with the previously unheard of return of 36 bags of padi per acre being recorded, though yields of 30 bags per acre were common.

However even though the yield was good the refusal of the RMB to accept hybrids for white rice was a severe blow. Although there were plenty of stories of farmers submitting hybrids and claiming that the rice was Starbonnet and so getting the premium, most were not so successful and had to accept brown rice prices. Since the hybrids also required substantial amounts of fertiliser they were expensive to grow and without the premium price their economic viability was severely in doubt. On the other hand the yields from Starbonnet continued to be lower than expected, though it milled well and the quality was high, with the result that farmers had no difficulty in obtaining the highest grades with this.

Thus a number of farmers were coming to the conclusion that it would indeed 'compensate' to plant Starbonnet even though it galled

them as farmers to have to give up the productivity of the hybrids. This process did indeed gather speed, for when I returned briefly to the village in 1975 almost the whole area was now under Starbonnet. The debate over the hybrids continued and one hybrid type was about to be approved for white rice production. Dr. Pawar had left the country to head an agricultural college in India, though not before the farmers of Windsor Forest had invited him to the village for a farewell, under a banner proclaiming 'God Bless Dr. Pawar - the Saviour of the Guyanese Rice Industry'.

Thus during the decade from the early 1960s to the early 1970s the farmers of Windsor Forest had undergone a major transformation of their cultivation practices, from labour-intensive transplanted cultivation with animal power to mechanised cultivation of a superior variety of padi that required very much more expensive inputs and more careful control. Throughout this period the farmers had shown themselves to be very willing to innovate, both in terms of machinery and in terms of calculating the most economical variety to grow. This was particularly apparent in the interest taken in the possibilities of the hybrids, their comparison with Starbonnet and the final evaluation of which was the more profitable. In this respect they showed themselves to be very 'modern' in their outlook and willingness to innovate. They were also becoming more 'professional' farmers as they mastered the technical complexities of their machines, the new varieties and the process of fertiliser application. This was something that the GRC and the RACs were anxious to encourage in order to improve the output and quality of Guyanese rice, with the development of a more 'professional' approach being a goal that was frequently referred to.

MILLING

Mention was made in Chapter 3 of the harsh things that the 1939 Parker report had to say about the state and effectiveness of the mills of the Guyanese rice industry. In this the single stage huller was roundly condemned, yet this was precisely the machine that was still relied upon to mill the rice produced by the postwar boom. Not surprisingly the milling sector of the industry left much to be desired. In 1957 the Rennison Committee was set up to examine the state of the milling sector and to make suggestions about how it should be improved. They too had some harsh things to say about the single stage huller:

"At the outset all members unanimously agreed that while single-stage huller-type mills had played their part in the development of the Industry, they were now out of date and unsuited to any area which was producing rice as a market crop. The immediate objective of the Industry must be to replace single-stage milling throughout the country."

(Rennison Committee, 1958, p 10)

Finally they recommended a scheme for what amounted to compensating millers for going out of business and allowing the installation of a smaller number of larger and more efficient modern mills. Here, however, the Government came up against the fact that although the milling sector might be inefficient it was also one of the wealthiest sections of the industry and relatively concentrated. Thus it was able to exert considerable pressure on the Government and the plan was never implemented.

The result of this action was that the traditional situation continued and when I first went to Windsor Forest some 15 years after the Committee reported the local mills were still predominantly single stage hullers, as was true of the rest of the country. Six of the eight local mills were single stage hullers oriented to the milling of

brown rice from traditional varieties. This entailed the soaking of the padi for 48 hours in large concrete tanks and then putting the wet padi into large oil drums, through which steam was passed. This had the effect of 'parboiling' the padi, making it easier to mill as well as making it more nutritious. The drums were next emptied out onto the mill's concrete and dried for approximately two days depending on the state of the weather. The padi was then re-bagged and taken into the mill for storage until it could be milled. The huller produced rice, broken rice and a mixture of bran and husks known as busi, which was a valuable form of animal feed and more commonly a fertiliser for vegetable plots.

The successor to the single stage mill is the more modern multi stage mill. This is a very much bigger piece of machinery that fills a whole shed and has a number of separate processes that have to be linked with conveyors and chutes. Although such mills can quite easily produce brown rice their great advantage is that they can also produce good quality white rice. For this the padi is not soaked but milled directly (although the padi is supposed to have only a specified moisture content millers are not able to regulate this effectively and so usually mill directly from the bond). The padi is treated much more gently than in the single stage machines and the husk is removed without disturbing the rest of the grain. Following this the thin layer of bran under the husk is removed and extracted separately. The grain is then taken through a series of additional stages where the damaged grains are removed and the good quality ones are polished.

This reveals one of the great advantages of growing padi for white rice; if the conditions are right it is possible to mill directly from the field and so cut out the worrisome problem of drying out in the open on the concrete, where the ever-present threat of unseasonal rain could easily severely damage a crop. However, things often are not ideal, so that farmers are not always able to bring padi to the mill in correct condition, and so it too has to be dried on the concrete before it can be milled. One way round this problem is to install driers that are heated by electricity to dry the padi to the required amount under perfect control, but these are very expensive and no millers in West Demerara had them. Nevertheless the GRC was engaged on a programme of building a series of silos throughout the country with the assistance of USAID to buy padi and dry it in this way for storage in the silos in optimal conditions. Furthermore one such silo was being constructed on the edge of Windsor Forest, though at the time of the fieldwork it had not been completed. Needless to say all farmers viewed it with some interest and millers with some trepidation.

Anxiety was, of course, felt most by the owners of single stage mills and the feeling was common amongst them that the writing really was on the wall for this type of mill. The feeling was hastened by the growth of the farmers' interest in white rice, which could only be milled in a multi-stage mill. Thus at the time of the fieldwork it seemed likely that the district would become a predominantly white rice producer, since the RMB's emphasis on this was likely to continue and the price differential to be attractive. Furthermore as one of the areas most suitable to the cultivation of new varieties the farmers would be under increasing pressure to make the switch for the

benefit of the industry's output, for not all areas were suitable for growing Starbonnet. Table 5/2 gives details of the output of the mills in the village, of which two were multi stage mills and six single stage mills. There were both single and multi-stage mills in adjacent areas, although Windsor Forest had the largest concentration of mills in general, as well as the largest concentration of single stage mills.

As can be seen from Table 5/2 there is a considerable difference between the scale of several of the mills. No.1 is a multi-stage mill owned by the largest farmer in the village and is mainly used for the milling of his own crop, although he is willing to mill for others to whom he takes a liking. Since he is a somewhat irascible old man this is not always easy to achieve, so that planning to use his mill is something of a risk for many farmers. The other multi stage mill is No.4. This is the largest mill in the village and is run by two unmarried brothers who are very assiduous businessmen. They also have one of the village combines, which helps them to offer a package of reaping and milling a farmer's padi. It is generally felt that theirs is the most likely mill to survive.

The other mills are much smaller in scale of operation, as is shown in Table 5/2. This Table gives details of the amounts of rice shipped to the RMB during the time of the fieldwork, though unfortunately one mill was out of commission during that time with a machinery breakdown. As can be seen the two multi stage mills shipped almost half of the total for the whole village (49.8%), and although this would have been slightly less with mill No.3 working, their dominance of the local situation is very apparent. Furthermore the two smallest

mills, Nos. 5 and 8, each shipped less than a fifth of the number of bags of the largest mill, No.4.

TABLE 5/2
RICE SHIPMENTS TO RMB BY WINDSOR FOREST MILLS
CROP YEAR 1971-1972

Month	Mill	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL
October		638	185	695	-	160	34	51	1763
November		795	274	683	140	257	210	277	2636
December		5	199	330	86	299	198	140	1257
January		-	204	228	80	241	191	-	944
February		-	165	180	73	140	163	59	780
March		-	181	640	-	183	140	8	1152
April		100	138	20	416	-	42	153	869
May		1034	423	1069	61	378	210	142	3317
June		-	61	-	3	327	189	-	580
July		6	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
August		70	357	80	-	379	182	-	1068
September		679	-	487	-	-	-	-	1166
TOTAL		3327	2187	4412	859	2364	1559	830	15538

All shipments are in bags of 180lbs weight

LANDHOLDING

As was mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3 the original aim of the formation of the Government Estates was to settle peasant farmers on the land, and so it is not surprising that the areas leased were not large. Huggins found in 1938 that holdings were 4.4 acres (1941:29). Similarly Smith found in 1956 that these were 5-6 acres (1957:515). The situation in 1972 was very similar, as Table 5/3 makes clear.

TABLE 5/3

TOTAL ACREAGES PLANTED BY WINDSOR FOREST FARMERS1956 & 1972

Acres	1956				1972			
	Farmers		Acres		Farmers		Acres	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	21	9.2	21	1.4	16	6.3	16	1.0
2	27	11.8	54	2.7	35	13.8	70	4.2
3	25	11.0	75	5.1	32	12.6	96	5.8
4	30	13.2	120	8.2	36	14.2	144	8.7
5	35	15.4	175	11.9	29	11.5	145	8.7
6	20	8.8	120	8.2	28	11.1	168	10.1
7	15	6.6	105	7.1	13	5.1	91	5.5
8	14	6.1	112	7.6	14	5.5	112	6.7
9	15	6.6	135	9.2	5	2.0	45	2.7
10	11	4.8	110	7.5	14	5.5	140	8.4
11	3	1.3	33	2.2	4	1.6	44	2.7
12	1	0.4	12	0.8	5	2.0	60	3.6
13	4	1.8	52	3.5	2	0.8	26	1.6
14	3	1.3	42	2.9	3	1.2	42	2.5
15	-	-	-	-	2	0.8	30	1.8
16	1	0.4	16	1.1	1	0.4	16	1.0
17	-	-	-	-	1	0.4	17	1.0
18	-	-	-	-	1	0.4	18	1.1
19	-	-	-	-	3	1.2	57	3.4
20 +	3	1.3	288	19.6	7	2.8	325	19.6
TOTAL	228	100.0	1470	100.0	253	100.0	1662	100.0

Source: 1956 figures, R.T.Smith 1957
Table 3 p.508

From the Table it can be seen that the great majority of farmers plant small acreages. The mean total is 6.6 acres, though the median is only 4.8 acres, indicating the preponderance of small acreages. In most cases holdings are in one plot, though some 32.4% of farmers have more than one plot, with 20, or 7.9%, having three or more plots. This situation arises from the fact that there is no mechanism for the consolidation of holdings under the leasehold system of the Government Estates. Smith mentioned (1957:507) that this was a problem in 1956 since it meant that a farmer who was seeking to increase his

landholding would be faced with the considerable problem of trying to obtain land adjacent to his existing plot. The only other effective thing to do is to buy a larger plot and at the same time sell off the original smaller plot, and this is indeed the kind of thing that tended to happen since it was easier to achieve than the process of consolidation at the original site. Nevertheless the fact that the size of holdings has altered so little over the preceding fifteen years at least indicates that this is not a cumulative process.

As well as being small the holdings tend to be clustered close to home as well, as Table 5/4 makes clear

TABLE 5/4

LOCATION OF RICE HOLDINGS - WINDSOR FOREST INDIAN FARMERS

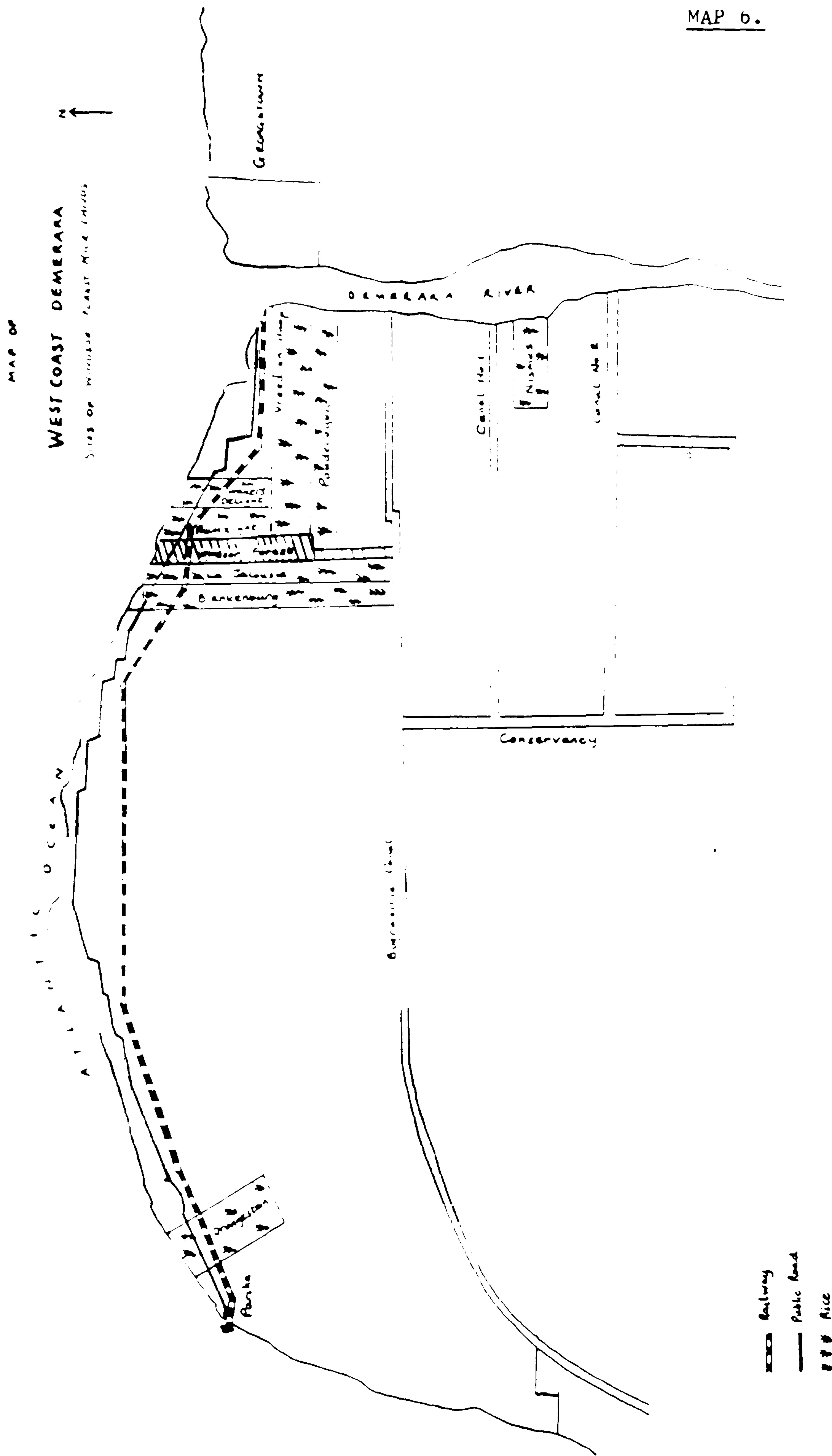
Locations	Number of Plots	Total Acres	Total Acres %
Windsor Forest	108	387	23.3
La Jalousie	109	469	28.2
Ruimzicht	54	188	11.3
Wallers Delight	21	109	6.6
Vreed en Hoop	29	108	6.5
Pouderoyen	10	127	7.6
West Bank	1	10	0.6
Other	34	264	15.9
TOTAL	366	1662	100.0

As can be seen from Table 5/4 more than half (51.2%) of the total acreage planted by Windsor Forest farmers is located in Windsor Forest

itself or neighbouring La Jalousie, which is part of the same Government Estate and because of its larger area but smaller population has long been the site of much Windsor Forest's rice activity. The next most popular area is Ruimzicht, which is the land to the other side of Windsor Forest, though in this case it is a private estate. Wallers Delight is beyond Ruimzicht, whilst Vreed en Hoop and Pouderoyen, whilst they are further away, actually abut onto the rear of the Windsor Forest cultivation and it is in this area that Windsor Forest farmers plant, with the result that they are not as far away from their neighbours as might appear (see Map 6).

It is only the 16.3% of lands planted in 'Other' areas that are likely to be remote from Windsor Forest, for it is difficult to obtain land locally since it is all already under cultivation. The problem is especially acute for those who wish to build a large acreage and it tends to be these men who plant out of the immediate area. The only place that they are likely to obtain land easily is to the west beyond the sugar estates and onto the banks of the Essequibo River where quite large tracts of land became available as a result of the Boeraserie Conservancy scheme. However this land is pegasse or peaty and not as fertile as the local land. Furthermore it is still in bush and has to be converted to rice use. Also, although the general drainage and irrigation have been provided, the overall system is not as well established as in the Windsor Forest area. Thus although there are two men with holdings in this area, one of 33 acres and the other of 42, it was felt that they were taking a major risk, even though they were both experienced farmers with good equipment.

MAP 6.



For those staying in the local area it is necessary to consider the purchase of land from existing users in order to build up a holding. Although the Government land is leased the leases themselves can be sold easily, and this is what is normally done, though as Smith pointed out (1957:506) this is not always recorded with the officials concerned, with the result that official records can be wildly inaccurate. In 1956 leases changed hands for around \$250-400 per acre (ibid), whereas in 1972 this figure had risen to about \$1,000 per acre.

Rented land too could be sold, although in this case what was changing hands was the tenancy. Since the implementation of the Rice Farmers Security of Tenure Ordinance in 1956 such tenants have had a good deal of security and there is not felt to be any danger in undertaking to purchase such a tenancy. However the quality of the drainage and irrigation facilities on private estates tend to be lower than those provided by Government, and this is reflected in the lower price of \$600 per acre common at the time. The most highly priced land was that which was owned outright, and that sold for \$1,200 per acre. The nearest land of this sort was in Wallers Delight, for although Ruimzicht was a private estate it was in fact owned in 63 acre blocks by the descendants of one of the early Chinese shopkeepers in the village.

As can be imagined from the pressures of the postwar boom, the demand for land has been considerable for some time. There is no spare land around and any that is for sale is snapped up quickly. Thus those who are interested in acquiring land have to go looking for it by spreading the word that they are interested, or by approaching

those who might be willing to sell, such as widows or those becoming elderly. Smith mentions the tradition of a man providing some land for his sons as they mature (1957:506), but with the price of land escalating the way it has done, many farmers expressed doubt about the ability to do so. This is borne out by the fact that only six men (2.6%) were unmarried farmers.

Traditionally one of the major constraints on the amount of land that a man could effectively work has been the problem of mobilising the most effective 'mix' of productive resources. Huggins talked (1941:30) of the problems of combining the number of oxen a man owned and the amount of land he was able to work. Similarly O'Loughlin (1958:142) mentions the way in which unpaid family labour is crucial for the viability of many farms such as those found in Windsor Forest. This was an important factor in determining a farmer's investment strategy, for he could only effectively hope to expand his cultivation if he had not only the right number of oxen to work the land, but also the right number of sons of the appropriate age, to assist him in this enterprise.

Now mechanisation has altered all that. The figure of 39 man-days to cultivate an acre of rice land that Smith produced (1957:509) consisted of not only a large number of actual days but also a mix of human effort ranging from the small boy required to drive the oxen sled, to women to transplant and reap, to youths and men to plough and do other heavy work (ibid:). With mechanised cultivation this figure can be cut very drastically, as Table 5/5 shows.

TABLE 5/5

LABOUR INPUTS UNDER HAND AND MECHANISED CULTIVATION

	<u>1956</u>			<u>1972</u>
	Males (days)	Females (days)		Males (days)
<u>Field</u>				
Ploughing	8	-	8	1.0
Harrowing	3	-	3	0.5
Cleaning field	2	-	2	2.0
Maintain seed bed	1	-	1	0.0
Transplanting	1	8	9	0.0
Maintain cultivation	3	-	3	4.0
Reaping	1	8	9	0.5
Kharian	1	-	1	0.0
Threshing	3	-	3	0.0
Total	23	16	39	8.0
<u>Mill</u>				
Soaking			1	0.0
Drying			4	0.0
Milling & Transportation			1	1.0
Total			6	1.0
<u>OVERALL TOTALS</u>			45 (days)	9 (days)

Source: 1956 figures from R.T. Smith 1957 Table 4 p. 509

This Table shows that not only does mechanisation remove a good deal of the work load from human operatives, but can cut out whole sections of them, such as female labour, as well. This is something that will be discussed again later.

The Table also indicates one of the main attractions of mechanical cultivation for farmers, and this is reflected in the number of tractors in the village. Mention has already been made of the fact that there are now 74 tractors in the village owned by Indians (plus one owned by a Chinese farmer). This more than tenfold increase since 1956 got underway in the 1960s, as Table 5/6 shows.

TABLE 5/6

TRACTOR PURCHASES BY WINDSOR FOREST FARMERS(INDIANS ONLY)

Year	N	%
1948	1	1.4
1950	1	1.4
1955	2	2.7
1956	2	2.7
1957	1	1.4
1958	4	5.6
1959	2	2.7
1960	13	17.8
1961	2	2.7
1962	4	5.6
1963	2	2.7
1964	6	8.2
1965	5	6.8
1966	3	4.1
1967	3	4.1
1968	8	11.0
1969	3	4.1
1970	5	6.8
1971	5	6.8
1972	1	1.4
TOTAL	73	100.0

Although this was somewhat later than the time of the highest levels of support for the rice industry, it was nevertheless represented to me by farmers as part of the result of the successes of the 1950s that they felt able to undertake the investment. In addition the figures

in the Table refer to machines currently owned, and do not reflect the numbers of machines that were bought earlier and have been replaced by the current machines.

The result of this situation is that as many as 65 (25.7%) Indian rice farmers have their own tractor, and five (2%) have two tractors, whilst one farmer has as many as five machines. This means that there are really too many machines for the total acreage that these farmers plant. Mention has already been made of the comment by Caffey and Efferson in 1965 that the national proportion of one tractor to eighty acres was fairly reasonable (1965:5). However the situation as far as Windsor Forest farmers were concerned was not so good, with what amounted to a serious over-provision of tractors. For the Indian farmers planted a total of 1,672 acres in total, which had to be worked by a total of 74 machines, giving one tractor for every 22.6 acres.

Even if we assume, which is quite reasonable, that the national pattern is to plant only one crop per year, whereas the Windsor Forest pattern is to plant two full crops per year, thus giving the machines twice as much work, the situation still is not good. For this gives only 45.2 acres per machine per year, little more than half the figure mentioned by Caffey and Efferson. It is hard to make an overall assessment of the most effective use of tractor resources and the phenomenon of 'tractorisation' of the Third World has been hotly debated by economists (Griffin 1979 ; Stewart 1978). This is largely because of the difficulty of incorporating all the possible other variables involved, such as alternative uses, the extent to which the machine is used on the land of others. However, no matter which

approach one makes to the situation in Windsor Forest, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that there are far too many machines for the needs of the farmers.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the pattern of machine use is very varied. One can safely assume that owners will use their own machines on their own land, though the extent to which they also work the land of others varies. There were no farmers who did not use a tractor to plough at least some of their land, for even those who owned bulls only used them to supplement the work of the tractor for such light work as raking the field smooth or for getting into the very corners of the field, especially if it was a small one, where the machine could not work effectively. Thus the three-quarters of farmers without their own machine had to obtain the services of others to prepare their field.

One of the obvious attractions of owning a tractor is the possibility of helping to pay for it by hiring it out to others, and Smith mentions this practice in 1956 (1957:511). However by 1972 many farmers had become disenchanted with this practice, since they claimed it did not pay as well as they had first imagined. Through the workings of 'the market' there had emerged a series of common charges that were adhered to by most farmers working other lands, but even so they felt that these were not adequate in many cases. Many farmers complained that people were slow to pay, others felt that the amount of work needed to be done to be financially worthwhile wore out the machines too quickly and some resented the time that this work involved. Nevertheless the land was ploughed and finding a tractor to do the work was not presented as a major obstacle for farmers. The

reason for this is that most farmers managed to make an arrangement with a tractor owner on the basis of some form of social relationship, either of kinship, friendship or neighbourliness, so that many farmers would quite happily work the land of those with whom they had close relationships whilst at the same time refusing to take on work for others.

Those who were not able to get access to a tractor in this way could always resort to the services of the two men in the village who owned machines but no land and so did tractor work as their main means of support. There was no problem or stigma attached to this and a number of farmers used them out of preference. They charged the same rates as others and their main advantage was that they would take all comers. Their approach was something about which farmers had strong opinions, since most felt that they were embarked on a foolish enterprise, especially since one of them was an extremely carefree chap who had a very cavalier attitude to money. The other, by contrast, was the Arya Samaj priest who had a very sober and responsible outlook on life, though some thought him too coolly successful, and when he also bought a car for his priestly duties, there was a spate of resentment and the frequently voiced suspicion that he was 'riding for a fall'.

Such behaviour may have coloured the view of most farmers that these men were behaving most unwisely in taking on so much work, though Mahadeo, the priest, only ploughed 120-150 acres in a good year, which does not seem excessively high in view of the opinions of the economists. Nevertheless the conventional wisdom was that they were burning out their machines too rapidly with all this work and

would soon regret it. As a result of this attitude many tractor owners talked of the ideal of being able to use their machines solely for their own use. Not only did this give them the convenience of working their land when they wished to do so, but also the knowledge that they could protect their machines and not over-stress them. Some farmers actually admitted to having achieved this state, though most did not, even if they would have liked to have done so. Instead they felt the pressures of social obligations to friends and neighbours.

Even those who only worked their own land were not necessarily in a very economic position as far as machine ownership was concerned, for the mean acreage planted by owners of one tractor was 11.9, whilst the median is only 9.9. Furthermore the owners of two tractors were not any better off, for the mean acreage planted by them is only 23.2, giving 11.6 acres per machine, whilst the median is 20 acres (10 per machine). Even allowing for the planting of two crops per year it is apparent that the vast majority of machines used for farmers' own land alone are under-used.

IMPLICATIONS OF MECHANISATION

Mechanised cultivation has a good deal of attraction for the farmer, as is witnessed by the extent to which this form of agriculture has been accepted in so many parts of the world. Firstly there is the one of convenience. Tractors are so much easier to work than oxen, they are more reliable, they do not have to be collected from the savannah several miles inland, they carry the farmer around and remove a good deal of the heavy labour from cultivation. Farmers would enjoy regaling me with tales of the horrors of working with bulls, of how they would not pull, how they sank in the mud and how

they could be temperamental and vicious. By comparison the tractor, even though it has its own problems, was seen as docile and obedient.

Then too, the tractor is considerably more powerful than the animals it replaced, with the result that it can do the kinds of things that were very difficult before, like plough very heavy mud, level fields that are uneven, pull trailers and carry bags of padi around both the field and the village. However it is in ploughing that the machine's attractions come most to the fore. For it can not only plough much more effectively than animals, getting deeper into the soil, but is also very much quicker. For with the mould-board plough the machine is ploughing at least four times as much as a man and oxen are, and more effectively too. The machine also travels very much faster than animals, so that the land is prepared in a fraction of the time that animals take.

All of the above were seen as important advantages that machines offered, especially to those fortunate enough to have their own. For this meant that they could now compete with the vagaries of the weather far more effectively than they could previously. Now it was possible to plough at the most advantageous time for both the harvesting timetable and the weather situation. Thus I was told time and time again that it is always the tractor owners who were the first to have their land prepared and to have the first harvest when the timetable was not too crowded. However even non-owners felt that they now had their land better prepared than before, especially if they were getting it done by someone they knew well and who could be relied upon to give it as much care as his own plot. The corollary of this, of course, is being at the mercy of uncaring operatives who offered

only a peremptory service, though this tended to be the character of the Government machinery pools rather than local farmers.

The ability to cope with the vagaries of the weather is even more important in relation to harvesting, and here too the mechanised solution offered a great deal. For the combine harvester reduced the labour input to this activity even more drastically than the tractor did to land preparation. What had taken several days to cut by hand with numerous helpers could now be done in less than half a day by the combine driver and two helpers. The 13 man-days that Smith calculated for the harvesting of an acre was now reduced to something like two man-hours with a combine harvester. Not only did this greatly reduce the amount of hard labour involved, but also, equally importantly, greatly reduced the risk of the crop being damaged by rain before the harvest was completed. All but the very largest plots could be reaped in a day and so there was now much more certainty that if the weather was good at the start of the reaping then it could be completed before the weather changed. This greatly improved the farmers' chances of getting a good quality harvest to the mill. It is therefore not surprising that only 0.1% of farmers reported using hand cutting by choice.

However, as was mentioned above, mechanised cultivation not only greatly reduced the amount of labour required for successful cultivation, it also removed some forms of it almost entirely. Thus in 1956 Smith included 16 days of female labour for the cultivation of an acre of rice land (1957:509). These were mainly involved in the transplanting of the seedlings and the harvesting of the crop. With the move to mechanised cultivation there came a move to the 'jarai'

system which involved broadcasting or 'shying' pre-germinated seed. Thus transplanting has disappeared from the entire area, and with it the need for the female labour involved.

Similarly the need for female labour in reaping has almost gone too, with only 33 farmers (13.5%) reporting cutting by hand, most commonly because the combine could not reach their plot. Two farmers reported cutting by hand by choice and working the kind of reciprocal family labour system, among themselves and other families in neighbouring villages, that Smith mentions as being typical of 1956 (1957:509). But those who had to hire labour to cut by hand claimed they had the greatest difficulty in finding those willing to do it, with the result that they often ended up with a collection of unemployed youths who were far from experienced. More favoured were elderly women, usually widows short of money, who had had experience of this kind of work in the past. Younger women preferred not to do this kind of work, and often had strong views about its undesirability.

The fact that female labour has been virtually eliminated from the cultivation of rice was often quoted to me as an example of the benefits and progress that had been made of late. It was almost universally considered desirable that women should not have to work in the fields in order for the normal processes of cultivation to be carried out. It was felt that it was much more desirable that they should stay at home and operate in the domestic sphere. As Smith pointed out (1957:510) even when women worked in the fields regularly they still had to attend to their domestic duties, particularly the preparation of meals. Now they were able to do so without the

interruption of assisting with the cultivation. There were some older women who professed to miss the camaraderie of the harvest work in the fields, though every time they tried to convince me of the joys of this experience, they were invariably shouted down by other women present who were keener to remember the hardships and misery of such work.

The ability to practice cultivation without female labour is undoubtedly a form of an increased standard of living. Thus Indian households were able to approximate more closely to the national cultural criteria of 'respectable' economic activity under which the women were not obliged to engage in the demeaning field labour in order for the family to survive. Although this was not how villagers expressed their views, the point was not lost on them that part of the improvement was in the way they appeared in the eyes of others.

The new-found freedom of women at certain times could be utilised in a number of ways. For the most part it continued to be allocated to the domestic sphere with time taken up with household tasks. Nevertheless it did allow women time for more economic activities, and several indicated that this was how they saw the situation. Whilst it had long been common for women to cultivate vegetable crops on the dams surrounding the rice fields, with them going there less frequently they increasingly tended to plant such crops in their house yards. These were for both family use and for sale in the local village market. Thus 67 women reported growing such vegetable crops and 30 reported regular selling in the market.

Alternatively women could engage in less agricultural economic activity, such as sewing clothes for sale in the market locally or in neighbouring estate markets. Such sewing tended to be for baby and childrens' wear, since adults were catered for by professional seamstresses and tailors in the village, although with the ready availability of sewing machines it was easy for women to enter this area without any formal arrangements. Increasingly for the younger girls who have had no experience of working in the fields the prospect of doing so is most unattractive and many teenage girls talked happily of not having been into the backdam for years. For them the economic goal is rather a glamorous job as a secretary or shop assistant in a Georgetown office or store. However the extent to which they will escape agriculture completely remains to be seen, since if they marry a country boy they are likely to find that the economic pressures of bringing up a family will compel some kind of involvement.

With the power so readily available from machines it is now possible for all kinds of people to practice rice cultivation who could not have contemplated doing so under the old regime. Thus widows and single women without teenage sons to help them are able to farm quite large tracts of land simply by hiring machines and occasional day labourers. They may oversee the cultivation themselves, but most do not, perhaps relying on the advice of a neighbouring farmer for guidance. This is not the most profitable way to farm, but in the straitened circumstances in which such women tend to find themselves it acts more as a financial life-line. Another group now able to farm more effectively than before are old men. Now they no longer need the assistance of their sons to do the work, for like the widows they are able to hire machines. They tend to be very

experienced farmers who oversee the cultivation and do some of the lighter work, only bringing in machines when needed. Thus one old man of 75 was able not only to cultivate five acres entirely on his own, but also to do so very proficiently thanks to his experience. Although he had to hire a tractor to plough his field and a combine to cut it, in this he was no worse off than the majority of farmers. He did have the extra expense of hiring occasional labourers, but claimed that this was more than made up for by the high yields he obtained.

However these benefits have been obtained at some cost. Mention has already been made of the way that the rice industry played the major role in absorbing the surplus labour displaced from the sugar industry during its post-war rationalisation (Smith 1957:502). This role could only continue as long as rice production was based on labour-intensive cultivation practices. With the move to mechanisation the rice industry was no longer able to play this role. Rather the situation was the reverse, in that not only could rice no longer absorb newcomers but it was also, like the sugar industry before it, now shedding labour itself. For mechanised cultivation simply does not need the same labour inputs as traditional practices, as we have seen. In the case of female labour there were alternative outlets in the form of the traditional domestic area and new economic opportunities associated with this, such as growing vegetables for sale, or sewing.

The other main group involved in labour displacement out of rice cultivation were the teenage sons who had traditionally helped their fathers cultivate the family rice land. For them there were not the same easily available alternative activities. It did still occur for

such youths to be supported by their families and for them to do all the main labour associated with cultivation, such as driving the tractor and applying fertiliser. However this work really only applied to larger farmers with their own machines, and even so it would only be enough to keep one son busy. For smaller farmers without a tractor there was now very little to keep the son occupied for much of the time. This problem was compounded by the declining profitability of rice, with the result that the need for some form of supplementary economic activity on the part of the son became more pressing.

Rice farming had never been a full-time activity in Guyana (Richardson 1975) and in the slack times farmers had traditionally added to their income by doing casual labour for the Government agencies looking after the rural infrastructure, such as the Drainage and Irrigation Board. But such work could not begin to absorb the numbers of young men now seeking paid work. Smith had talked about the problems likely to face Windsor Forest in the future when the rising population came up against the limits of the productive capacity of the area available for cultivation (1957:519). Now the displacement of labour consequent on the move to mechanised cultivation, added to the existing rate of population growth, appeared to have hastened the crisis considerably. The 'solution', which had not been foreseen by Smith, was a move to urban work in Georgetown as commuting workers. This has largely coped with the problem of surplus labour in the village, but has had considerable consequences for other aspects village life, as will be discussed more fully later.

Interestingly enough the move to urban work has been accompanied by a relatively unusual development connected with mechanised cultivation. For full time workers are one of the groups who can now still plant rice thanks to the benefits of mechanisation. The timetabling of early ploughing is not so critical for those who do not have their own machine and so arrangements can be made for the land to be ploughed whilst the owner is at work and he is able to inspect it when he gets home or even at a weekend. When the time comes to 'shy' his seed he takes a day off work to do this. During the initial rooting period he will make frequent trips to his plot after work and do any patching etc at weekends. Whilst the padi is growing he will rely on neighbouring farmers to keep an eye on his land and to let in the irrigation water at the same time as they are doing theirs. If any emergencies arise he can take time off work by being 'ill' to spray chemicals for instance. At harvest time he can take another day or so off work to see his crop cut, with possibly further odd days off to cope with milling.

Thus rice farming need not conflict very much with full-time work. Of course the quality of such farming is not high, and numerous farmers decry this practice as not being how farming should be carried on. Whilst it is also true that the yield from such plots is lower than the full-time farmer obtains, the economic viability of such cultivation practices can be justified in the eyes of those who farm this way because the income from rice is supplementary to their earned income in town.

THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF RICE FARMING

One of the major problems with mechanised cultivation is that it is very expensive. The machines themselves have to be bought and, equally importantly, maintained. Although Smith claimed that farmers had often bought machines that were too small for the difficult clay soils of the Guyanese coastland (1964:323), the machines in the village were remarkably robust and 26 were more than 10 years old, with some being as many as 15 or more years old. By now farmers had also learned how to maintain their machines reasonably well, although it is doubtful if many are kept in tip top condition. Nevertheless farmers continually complained of the cost of spares and the difficulty of obtaining them. This is even more of a problem with combines, which are rather fragile machines which break down often, with the result that one of the combine operators in the village claimed to carry a stock of spares costing \$3,000.

Since all these machines are made overseas, mostly in Britain, the importing countries like Guyana are forced to import the inflation that has characterised the industrial economies since the war. This has tended to turn the terms of trade against the primary producing countries such as Guyana. Thus the cost of the kind of small Massey-Ferguson tractor used in the village went up from \$3,500 in 1956 to \$8,500 in 1972, a rise of 143%. During that same time the price paid by the RMB for a bag of Extra No.1 rice rose from \$16.90 to \$18.75, a rise of only 11%. Thus the farmers of Windsor Forest, like all those in the Third World, have found it harder and harder to maintain their mechanised system of production, while the situation has become markedly worse with the great increase in the price of fuel oil and lubricants that has taken place in the recent past. Another

continually worrisome aspect of this last development is the effect it has also had on the cost of fertilisers, which have a large oil-based component and on which the new varieties of padi are heavily dependent.

Tractors, at least, are reasonably robust, but combines, on the other hand, not only break down frequently but also wear out rapidly. The farmer whom Smith mentions as having a combine in 1956 has since replaced it with another, and one of the other operators who bought his first in 1960 sold it in 1964 to replace it with his current one, which cost him \$20,000. Another machine bought in 1967 cost \$36,000 and by the time Hakim bought his last one in 1970 it cost him \$44,000. None of these machines is expected to last more than ten years at the most and all combine operators worry about how they will be able to replace their machines.

Warnings about the undesirability of embarking on mechanised cultivation have been made for some time. In 1958 the Director of Agriculture made the following comments to the Rennison Committee:

"A very arbitrary division can be drawn between mechanisation problems for the small farmer, that is a farmer with a farm of less than say twenty acres at the most. Under present conditions it is clear that to purchase mechanical equipment would not be in the best interests of the farmer. The capital cost of the normal sized tractors is far too high for the amount of work that the machines would be put to on that particular farm."

(Rennison Committee, 1958, Appendix A, p 10)

Even if we assume that the Director is talking about a one-crop régime the twenty acres of which he spoke would translate into ten acres in a two-crop system like Windsor Forest. This is precisely the acreage that the average tractor owning farmer in Windsor Forest plants, which

means that they represent precisely the kind of farmer he said should not own their own machines.

Furthermore there is evidence to suggest that it was precisely the unpaid family labour and intensive cultivation practices of the former traditional system that made rice farming marginally profitable. O'Loughlin conducted a survey of rice farmers in Guyana in 1957 which showed that the level of mechanisation in West Demerara as a whole was lower than in the rest of the country (1958:142) and that the profitability of these farms was largely determined by the unpaid labour inputs and intensive methods (ibid). Some of her cases come from areas that are leased from Government, which must mean the Government Estates, which is also likely to mean Windsor Forest as the largest (ibid:139). Furthermore her general description tallies well with that described by Smith (1957). The possibility of mechanisation undermining other benefits was also recognised by Kundu when he said :

"One must, however, take into account the effect of agricultural practices, viz. mechanisation of the cultivation of paddy.....in British Guiana the average yield of paddy per acre in large farms (fully mechanised, wet cultivation method) is 1,960 lbs., whereas in small farms (all hand labour, rice transplanted) the yield is as high as 2,800 lbs. Hence the advantages of better irrigation and seeds and more fertiliser may be easily offset by mechanisation."

(Kundu 1964:277)

The issue of the costs of production for Guyanese rice is something that has been of concern to the industry for a long time. At the highest level there is the issue of whether the expense of the infrastructure of drainage and irrigation facilities necessary for coastal agriculture in Guyana are such a hindrance that the cost of production of rice is always going to be beyond the level of economic viability. This in turn means that production might need to be

subsidised by other sectors of the economy, which in turn has an important bearing on whether rice growing should be encouraged. At a different level Kundu mentions the heated wrangles that characterised the post-war Rice Conferences that were seeking to fix a price for Guyanese rice, and the way in which costs of production were called for and vetted (1964:264). Mention has already been made too of the way local farmers tried to work out the profitability or otherwise of the new varieties. None of these exercises seems to have been characterised by much success.

The problems of this activity and the difficulties arising from the move to mechanised cultivation are brought out in Table 5/7. One of the things that is most striking about this Table is the extent to which the profitability of rice farming can be seen to have declined since 1956. At first the costs of cultivation for an acre under Traditional varieties in 1972 would appear to be less, at \$126.54, than the figure quoted by Smith for the same operations in 1956 (\$144.38), both of which are based on the rather high return of twenty bags of padi per acre used by Smith. However it must be remembered that the costings for 1956 are largely notional and few, if any, farmers would have hired labour for all the operations mentioned in the costings. Rather these tasks would have been fulfilled by unpaid family labour, thereby greatly reducing the direct costs incurred by the farmer. Thus the expenses connected with milling were often the only ones that required a direct cash outlay, and even these could be accommodated within the RMB's payment system.

TABLE 5/7

COMPARATIVE COSTS OF RICE PRODUCTION PER ACRE

<u>Operations</u>		<u>Varieties</u>		
		<u>Local</u> 1956 \$	<u>Local</u> 1972 \$	<u>Starbonnet</u> 1972 \$
<u>Field</u>				
Ploughing	First Cut	(25.00	7.00	7.00
	Second Cut	(6.00	6.00
	Ramping & Raking	10.00	6.00	6.00
				7.60
Seed				
Fertiliser	TSP			6.00
	Urea			16.00
Insecticide				2.75
Reaping		9.60	25.00	22.50
Dragging		5.00	2.40	2.16
Haulage to mill		16.00	4.00	3.60
<u>Mill</u>				
Putting out		1.00		0.72
Soaking		1.50	0.80	
Drying		10.00	8.00	7.20
Milling		13.20	16.20	18.00
Bags		5.50	8.00	10.08
Bagging			1.44	1.44
Haulage to station		0.66	3.00	3.00
Transport to RMB		2.42	4.20	4.20
<u>Other</u>				
Land rent		10.00	12.50	12.50
Labour	Preparation	5.00	8.00	8.00
	Seeding etc.	23.50	2.00	2.00
	Fertiliser			6.00
	Insecticide			2.00
	Maintainance	6.00	12.00	12.00
<u>Total Costs</u>		144.38	126.54	166.75
Excluding Labour Costs		44.28	95.04	127.25
<u>Return*</u>		186.90	208.20	275.60
<u>Surplus</u> (Return less Costs Excluding Labour Costs)		<u>142.62</u>	<u>113.16</u>	<u>148.35</u>

* Assuming the following production performance:

Local (1956 & 1972): 20 bags padi, giving 10 bags rice (Super grade) and 1 bag broken grains.

Starbonnet: 18 bags padi, giving 12 bags white rice (White A), 1/2 bag broken and 1 1/2 bags bran

Source: 1956 figures, R.T.Smith 1957 p.512

By 1972, on the other hand, the situation had altered considerably, with a great increase in the number of items for which a farmer was obliged to pay, largely as a result of the move to mechanised cultivation. Now it was necessary to pay for the tractor to plough the field (for the majority without their own machine), the combine to cut it and the miller to transport the padi to the mill. In addition, for those who needed to use fertilisers, weedicides and insecticides there were further cash outlays required. Even the farmers with their own machines were obliged to make cash outlays too, for in addition to the purchase of the machines, the spares and fuel to keep them running had to be purchased, as did the insurance and licences for both machine and driver.

Thus the only area that offered farmers any scope for minimising their expenditure was in the actual maintenance of the plot itself, the cleaning and weeding once cultivation had started and the application of fertilisers and chemicals. However this represents only a relatively small proportion of the overall costs of cultivation, with the result that we find that whereas the farmer of 1956 could get by with having only 30% of his notional costs actually obligatory, by 1972 more than 75% of the farmer's notional costs were now obligatory. For those farmers without their own machines the proportion of obligatory costs would be even higher. Thus there were a significant number of farmers in 1972 for whom the figures in Table 5/7 represented a fair approximation of their actual pattern of expenditure.

If we make a hypothetical comparison between a farmer's situation in 1956 and 1972 some of the effects of mechanisation can be seen more

clearly. From Smith's figures, in 1956 the farmer would have had actual costs of something like \$44.28, which would have been set against a total return of \$186.90, giving a surplus of \$142.62. If we also assume that in 1972 the same farmer had his own tractor and that the cost of preparing his land was half of what was charged to others he would have had actual costs of something like \$95.04 per acre. If we further assume that he gets the same yield of padi (twenty bags per acre) and the same amount of rice (ten bags and one bag of broken) at the same grade (Super), he would have a return of \$208.20. This in turn would give a surplus of \$113.16, which is actually \$29.46 LESS than he would have received in 1956. These figures are not adjusted to take account of inflation, whereas in fact the Guyana Rural Consumer Price Index for the period from 1956 to 1972 rose by 35%, which gives an effective reduction of 48% (Cross 1979:37).

Apart from this example being hypothetical it is also somewhat unreal in that it refers to farmers planting Traditional varieties, whereas as has been mentioned already there was a significant move to the cultivation of newer varieties during the time of the fieldwork. Nevertheless the economics of the production of traditional varieties gives some indication of the reasons for the farmers' keenness to move to the more profitable new varieties.

Table 5/7 also gives a comparative costing for the growers of Starbonnet which is based on the same kinds of rather favourable assumptions as that of the Traditional varieties. This entails a good yield of eighteen bags of padi per acre, which only the best farmers obtained, and for the rice to obtain the highest grade, which was commonly achieved. The resulting surplus (excluding labour costs where

possible) of \$148.35, which is 31% higher than that obtained from the Traditional varieties, giving further evidence of the desirability for farmers to plant the new varieties where possible. Nevertheless the raw figure is only \$5.73 higher than the farmer received for his Traditional variety in 1950. When the inflation of the intervening years is taken into consideration the effective surplus is only \$3.72 (Economic Survey of Guyana 1973:75).

This situation of basic unprofitability is something that had been talked about and predicted for some time. Mention has already been made of the way in which the PPP Government's Development Programme featured such a heavy emphasis on the expansion of the rice industry in the 1950s and 1960s, and there were those who cast doubt on the wisdom of this at the time. In particular Newman (1960) tried to press the need for industrialisation as the only way to generate the wealth required for investment. Similarly Dumont, when invited by the Government to report on the development of Guyanese agriculture was struck by the emphasis on cash-crop farming for export at the expense of other agricultural enterprises (1963:1). He also doubted the wisdom of investing so heavily in the rice industry when the costs of production in Guyana were so high, because of the problems of drainage and irrigation, that the market viability of the industry would always be in question. There was also the problem that the product itself was an inherently low-return crop (ibid:14).

The same message had been pressed by those nearer home too. Dr. K.F.S. King, who later became a 'technocrat Minister' in the PNC Government, cast severe doubt on the viability of the rice investment programmes undertaken by Government:

"Rice offers little scope for export expansion, little opportunity for absorbing surplus labour, and contributes little to the economic well-being of its growers. In addition, it utilises a great deal of capital in hidden subsidies. No expansion in area is therefore recommended."

(King, 1968:107)

O'Loughlin also stressed the low returns from rice and the small contribution it made to the overall economy:

"The share of the rice industry is thus approximately 5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. That is a very small part of the national income and indicates that in view of the large numbers employed in rice at some time or other, the earnings are shared out very thinly over those involved. The estimate also indicates that the value significance of the rice industry is extremely small as compared with the significance in the political and social fields."

(O'Loughlin 1958:125)

Berrill himself admitted "it can also be agreed that B.G. is probably too heavily committed to rice" (1961:3), though he was also trying to justify the degree of emphasis placed on agriculture in the Development Programme, which was constructed on the basis of the stark pressures to which the Government was subject. Even so the long-term disadvantages of a deep involvement with rice were all too apparent:

"The swing away from rice has got to come and the sooner the better. Few people in B.G. need converting to the view that without diversification small farm agriculture will remain poor, or doubt the dangers of producing more and more rice for export."

(Berrill 1961:3)

As usual Peter Newman put it most succinctly - "Generally speaking, however, rice is a poor man's crop" (1960,271).

These are trenchant criticisms of the degree of emphasis that successive Governments gave to rice cultivation and the question remains why this emphasis was repeated over such a long time. It is undoubtedly true that whilst some have the benefit of hindsight some

other criticisms were known at the time, though none were made at the time when the institutional commitment really gained momentum in the 1940s. That successive Governments chose to ignore these comments can be explained, particularly in the case of the PPP, as a simple case of political spoils, though I think that this is the least satisfactory explanation since it clarifies so little. If we rather accept the possibility of other interpretations then we can see a Government trying to react to a number of conflicting pressures, some internally generated, and some externally. Thus all post-war Governments sought to grapple with the problems of a booming population within the context of an economy where the main employer and economic mainstay, the sugar industry, was displacing labour and where the economy itself was not expanding sufficiently rapidly to create new employment opportunities (Mandle 1973:122-139).

Mandle and others have argued that the only way in which the Government could attempt to cope with this situation was by expanding the rice industry, not only to stimulate the economic growth of the country, but also to absorb the rising labour force. The fundamental difficulty with this was that the means used to achieve the expansion - mechanisation - also undermined the employment-creating aspect of the strategy. As Mandle has said:

"The rice sector was able to absorb only a small fraction of the number of individuals necessary to absorb to solve the country's surplus-labor problem. Further, since rice was dominated by farmers of East Indian extraction, heavy public investment in that sector tended to be interpreted by members of other ethnic groups as disproportionately favoring one section of the community at the expense of the others."

(Mandle 1973:138)

Thus the strategy not only failed to create enough employment opportunities for the Indian surplus labour, but also failed to

contain them within the rural economic system, as was also intended. Such a strategy had great social implications as will be discussed later.

Even amongst those who were either in favour of rice cultivation or who saw no alternative agricultural strategy becoming available, all was not well. For there were serious problems in connection with the actual implementation of the strategy. Thus Beckford has stressed the need for effective management of the overall enterprise, for unless the "appropriate institutional arrangements for uniting all the available resources in the productive effort" are available then the presence of the other prerequisites for change will not be enough (1972:194). Such deficiencies are very apparent in the case of Windsor Forest, for although there was a "highly motivated population" and "adequate supplies of complementary resources - land and capital" (ibid), the move to mechanised cultivation has turned out to be less economically advantageous than it could have been.

The basic problem that exists in the Windsor Forest area is that the resources of mechanisation have been applied in too haphazard a way. Thus although the estates are all still laid out in the large fifteen acre fields originally created in sugar estate times these remain sub-divided into the smaller plots of individual owners, with the result that the largest individual plot in the Windsor Forest area is 12 acres. No real attempt has been made to rationalise the land-holding pattern to consolidate acreages nor to turn the individual plots into shares in a larger field.

The original system emerged out of the practices associated with small family enterprises working small amounts of land using animal and human power. The tractor and the combine have simply been grafted onto this existing structure with no attempt to modify it to come to terms with the fact that such machines are most effective in extensive open fields. Yet this is precisely what Smith forecast should be avoided when he predicted that "if large-scale mechanisation were to be feasible it is probable that either each farmer's acreage would have to be increased or some form of co-operative enterprise would be necessary" (1957:511).

Apparently an attempt to rationalise land in this way was contemplated in the 1950s by Government, but met fierce local opposition from farmers. It was at the same time as, and may have been associated with, the proposals to make the area into a Local Authority, another unpopular proposal. The outcome was the same in both cases: the plans were abandoned. In the case of the Local Authority these have now been resurrected, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, and it is possible that the rationalisation of land-holding will also come about. The farmers of Windsor Forest, as keen PPP supporters, were able to mobilise sufficient political pressure to resist the Government's proposals and so the Government let the issue drop.

Similarly the Government did not have the resources or the will to monitor and regulate the application of tractors and combines in the industry, thus the tractorisation of Windsor Forest seems to have taken place against a background of considerable official support and precious little regulation (Newman 1964:70). Now restrictions are

belatedly being applied, with farmers obliged to make a case for the purchase of a machine and the officials able to decide that the resources in an area are adequate already, but in the case of communities like Windsor Forest such action has come far too late.

An alternative strategy would have been to have sought to rationalise the purchase and operation of machines into some kind of co-operative effort as Smith suggested. However, given the lack of collective institutions in the village and the existing emphasis on individual family enterprises, this would have been very difficult to do (Smith 1964:317). Furthermore the example of the GRC machinery pools did not offer an encouraging example with which to influence farmers. Thus one can see that in Windsor Forest the 'modernisation' approach alone is not enough, the mere presence of technically sophisticated inputs by a motivated population does not guarantee 'successful development'. As Kundu says "the advantages of better irrigation and seeds and more fertiliser may be easily offset by mechanisation" (1964:277).

One may ask how the farmers of Windsor Forest therefore managed to place themselves into such an uncomfortable position. Mention has already been made of the degree of Government assistance to the industry and the way in which farmers were willing to respond to the opportunities for expansion of land in the post-war period. Furthermore the Government, through its agencies such as the RMB and the Agricultural Extension Service, exerted a considerable amount of pressure on farmers to increase their output. Like so many colonial governments the one of Guyana used an 'improvement model' (Long 1977:145-148) of how things could be improved by bigger and better

inputs. Thus the emphasis was on making things easier for the farmer and pointing out to him where he should go in the future. So in addition to the financial incentives there were a series of 'field days' organised up and down the country at which the latest techniques and equipment were demonstrated, often in conjunction with the machinery importers. There were also increased numbers of pamphlets produced to assist the farmer in improving his crop, and later, with the emergence of the GRC, there was a positive flood of glossy handbooks and pamphlets aimed in particular at those farmers able to grow Starbonnet. One can therefore readily accept that the 'message' of the prospects of development was well and truly understood by the farmers.

Coupled with the publicity of the Government and commerce there was also the more subtle 'demonstration effect' of seeing other farmers with the new machines in the village and witnessing the benefits that came from them. In this regard the benefits of convenience, reliability and additional power were very self-evident. Another dimension of this is the way in which machines were seen as being 'modern' and 'progressive', the latter being a word which is commonly used with a sense of approval. Many writers have commented on the extent to which a tractor in the yard of a house in Guyana is every bit as much as a desirable status symbol as the car parked in front of the suburban house in the industrial world (Newman 1964:61). Kundu also comments "Even now the small size of the holdings does not deter the farmers from mechanisation, uneconomic as it may be, for the advantages of social prestige and fairly easy credit facilities"(1964:267).

Although such evidence is hard to pin down it is a clear impression gained by many observers and often mentioned by farmers themselves. It is of great significance as a motivating force and furthermore ties in with other pressures and influences at work on the Indians during the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1950s in particular the movement to internal self-government and the revised franchise of the 1953 constitution roused a great many expectations in the minds of Indians in the country. This came to be focussed on the issue of whether the demographic preponderance of the Indians posed some kind of threat to the country and whether they would look to a wider pan-Indian allegiance. This view was expressed forcefully in the Robertson Commission (Cmd 9274 1954), though it has been roundly condemned by informed observers (Smith 1962:140; Newman 1964:52). The expansion of the rice industry, the sustaining of living standards (Newman 1964:56) and the advancement to full political maturity were all signs to Indians that things were getting better, and in such an atmosphere of optimism the adoption of full 'progressive' status by espousing mechanised cultivation must have been a powerful factor.

Associated with this process is an allied element, that of female labour. There can be no doubt that the ability to cultivate successfully without having to utilise the labour of the females of a farmer's own household was an important form of conspicuous consumption. This indicated a degree of economic success, competent farming, progressive attitudes and the possibility of the women of the household according much more to the standards of 'respectability' operating elsewhere in the society. For Indians were well aware of the low social prestige associated with field labour generally.

Once the move to mechanised cultivation was underway it took on a dynamic of its own which further constrained farmers to make the change to the new ways. For those who wished to remain with the traditional ways found that increasingly they were at a disadvantage in comparison with those operating under the new system. So that in the race against the weather the farmers using the traditional techniques would be way behind those using tractors in the preparation of land for sowing. This made a significant difference in a number of areas. Firstly there was the problem of water, for it is almost essential that those who plant adjacent plots are working to the same timetable and so taking in water at the same time and draining their fields at the same time, but if a farmer is wildly out of step because of his slower techniques he will suffer a continuing series of setbacks and inconveniences, as well as the 'aggravation' of his neighbours.

The disadvantages of traditional cultivation practices become more apparent at the time of harvesting. Mention has already been made of the extent to which the harvest is now speeded up considerably by the use of combines. By contrast a farmer cutting by hand, if he can find the labour willing to work for the low rates he can afford to pay, would not only run a greater risk of weather damage, but would also find himself at the back of the queue in the mill. For farmers are not only competing against the weather to get the crop in quickly, but also against each other to get into the mill as soon as possible so that not only will their padi mill quickly and stand less chance of deterioration, but will also get to the RMB quicker too. This in turn means that not only do they get paid more quickly but also their padi tends to get a higher grade, since new padi is at a premium at the

start of a new harvest. The farmers who stand the best chance of getting into this virtuous circle are those who have their own tractor, and this was often quoted as one of the main reasons for having one.

That is also one of the reasons why there can be no going back to the old methods of cultivation. For apart from the fact that there is now no longer enough land to graze the bulls that would be required, the whole system of the village and its connections with the external agencies is geared to mechanical cultivation. Furthermore a farmer wishing to go back would have the greatest difficulty in obtaining labour willing to work in this way at the rates he could afford to pay. One of the key elements of the traditional system was, of course, that it was based on unpaid family labour, and here too the farmer is likely to meet resistance from women who do not want to go back into the fields. Furthermore he would be the target of intense ridicule for making such a retrogressive step, as would the members of his family who assisted him. He would have made a public confession of his inability to succeed by the standards of his peers. He would be admitting his economic failure and his incompetence as a modern farmer. Thus it appears that mechanised cultivation is here to stay in Guyana.

Despite the appearance of being caught in an economically unattractive situation, there still continues to be a strong interest in rice farming and a strong demand for land. As far as I could determine this comes from two sources. First of all there are those farmers who have a quite substantial acreage which they are able to farm effectively and possibly profitably. They are the farmers who

own between ten and twenty acres, have a tractor and tend to be older. They are likely to be making a profit from rice and able to raise the capital for land purchase, possibly with an eye to giving part of it to a son after his marriage.

The second group are those who work in town, usually in full-time jobs, and for whom rice farming is supplementary to their earned income. For them rice land is bought for two main reasons, either as a supplement to their income which will also serve as a safety net in the event of their losing their job, or as a potential growth point which allows them either to continue it as a subsidiary activity or to branch out into full-time rice farming if the prospects are good. Increasingly the pattern for young men is that they are forced to take a full-time job, if they can get one, and to save from this to acquire their rice land. This is reflected in Table 5/8.

TABLE 5/8

AGES OF MALE RICE FARMERS BY LOCATION OF OCCUPATION

Age	Local		External	
	N	%	N	%
20-29	10	6.2	9	13.6
30-39	25	15.5	25	37.9
40-49	42	26.1	16	24.2
50-59	52	32.3	15	22.7
60-69	23	14.3	1	1.5
70-79	9	5.6	-	-
TOTAL	161	100.0	66	100.0

From this Table it can be seen that those rice farmers who have a 'Local' economic orientation, such as full time rice farmers, local labourers and those with local economic interests, are significantly older than the rice farmers who have an 'External' orientation. This latter category includes those who have regular work or businesses outside the community. In particular it covers those workers who are employed in Georgetown. Thus in the External group 51.5% are in their twenties and thirties, whereas only 41.7% are in the Local group.

There thus appears to be no diminution of the degree of interest in rice farming in the area and among all ages of the population. However the pattern of farming has been irrevocably altered by the move to mechanisation and the role that it has to play in the economic life of the community has now to be shared with other forms of economic activity, especially full-time employment out of the community.

OTHER AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

From the earliest times of its foundation as a Government Estate rice has dominated the community of Windsor Forest and it continues to be the most significant agricultural activity of the residents. As far as the country as a whole is concerned, however, it is sugar that is dominant and it is not possible to go far in Guyana without coming across manifestations of this dominance. Thus even in Windsor Forest there is a certain amount of cane grown. At the rear of the estate, where the land is not so good for rice, the old cane beds of the estate time were left and have always been cultivated. There are some 45 acres laid out in this way, and about the same amount in

neighbouring La Jalousie. These are leased from the Government just as with the rice land and the produce has traditionally been sold to a cane marketing co-operative that deals with the sugar estates on their behalf.

The representative of the co-operative contacts the estate on the West Bank to arrange when the cane should be delivered and the estate arranges to have a number of the large metal punts used for this purpose made ready. These are then towed through the network of trenches at the backs of the estates to Windsor Forest and loaded with cane when it is cut. This is usually done at a weekend to give people more time to complete the work, which has to be done by hand, and so as not to interfere too much with the daily routine of the estate. The punts are then towed back to the estate where in turn they are unloaded, the cane weighed, its sugar content assessed and the amount to be paid to the farmers is calculated.

Traditionally the estates in Guyana have not been very keen on taking the produce of small peasant cane farmers, unlike elsewhere in the Caribbean. Thus there is no strongly established peasant cane growing sector of the economy and Windsor Forest is fortunate and rather unusual to have this arrangement. Now this deficiency has been recognised, as a result of the Persaud Report (1968) and the Government's policy is now to encourage this development. The result is that peasant cane farming is considered to be a profitable venture and is expanding, which in turn has increased the demand for cane land in Windsor Forest and La Jalousie.

However such a move poses problems, in that the land of the community is fully allocated to rice cultivation and to convert any of this to sugar growing would mean a major upheaval of the whole field structure and is almost inconceivable in view of the expense this would involve. The one area of possible expansion was into the savannah where the bulls had been grazed. With their demise the land became vacant and in the late 1960s was made over to cane and produce cultivation, with 40 acres being devoted to each.

The new organisation was the Windsor Forest/La Jalousie Peasant Cane Marketing Co-operative which was set up under the Government's programme of co-operatives. These had been designated the distinctive form of Guyanese advancement, to be followed in 1970 by the creation of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. The new co-operative was in addition to the existing and long-standing Windsor Forest and La Jalousie Progressive Cane Farming Co-operative (note the use of the word 'Progressive'), and despite the fact that the estates normally refused to deal with more than one group in an area the new co-operative was allowed to go ahead.

The reason for this was that it was run by Nan who had become converted to the PNC political cause and was the Government's chief representative in the village. Later, in 1970, he became the Chairman of the newly created Local Authority for the area. In addition he was also Chairman of the local Rice Action Committee and so was already deeply involved in the application of Government policy to agriculture in the area. Given the Government's desire to see co-operatives established and successful and given further their desire to gain more support in villages like Windsor Forest, it is not surprising that the

new co-operative received a considerable amount of support. The land was cleared of bushes and prepared by heavy plant and there was a considerable amount of fertiliser and other chemicals made available to the members.

However, in view of the political implications involved in joining such a scheme some farmers refused to have anything to do with it. This meant that the members were often poorer farmers or labourers who could not afford rice land but who could manage the lower rates for the leases of the new cane land. In addition there were a number of white collar workers in the village who also joined in as a supplementary source of income and as a way of keeping alive their agricultural interest. The requirements of Government were that the land should be worked collectively, but this proved to be hard to achieve, with the result that the enterprise soon fell into disarray, amidst accusations that people had not done their share of the work, had not turned up at the right time and did not have the right degree of commitment. Interestingly enough such complaints were not levelled against the urban workers, who, although they could only work at weekends, had shown a willingness to work hard.

The failures of the new co-operative were watched with interest and glee by many villagers who were opposed to the political stance that the new venture represented. The members of the existing co-operative, which continued to trade most effectively with each man tending his own plot, resented the degree of assistance received by the new venture in contrast to what they had received. This contrast was made all the more piquant by the fact that the old co-operative was in fact run by Nan's brother. Their houses backed onto each other

but they had not spoken for years, and although he was a very quiet man Mallau was known to take deep satisfaction from his brother's travails.

Thus for those 27 Windsor Forest farmers who planted cane with Mallau and his traditional co-operative, each working an average of 2-3 acres, the growing of cane was becoming more lucrative. But because of the land use structure there was not really any possibility of it being anything but a supplementary crop to that of rice. As far as Nan's group was concerned the future did not look so bright since the bush was once more taking over their land, and unless they could develop a better organisation the prospects of any return for their labours was not great.

The one part of Nan's venture that did show signs of success, however, was that part of the scheme involved with growing ground provisions. These are root crops such as edoes, yams, and cassava, and traditionally have been seen as 'African' types of crop. Nevertheless the 40 acres devoted to this have been effectively farmed, largely because only a minority of the members took up the option of being involved in this activity and because it is possible to prepare the land with machines, thus requiring less hand labour. There are in addition a few farmers who plant such crops at the rear of Windsor Forest and sell them to hucksters for resale in Georgetown markets, and a number of these market traders live in the village.

Although this activity can be very profitable most farmers do not show much interest in it. One man has been planting 4 acres at the back of Windsor Forest enthusiastically and profitably for twenty

years and is always anxious to impress on others the value of this activity. But generally he is considered rather eccentric and few other farmers share his enthusiasm. Indeed most of the land at the rear of Windsor Forest that was previously allocated to provisions has been turned over to cane cultivation. When I asked about this I was usually told that farmers preferred to stick to rice since they 'know rice', though as the provision farmer is keen to point out there is not very much to learn about provision farming given the existing agricultural skills of rice farmers.

Dumont commented specifically on the extent to which the Guyanese peasant farmers ignored food crops for sale locally and concentrated almost exclusively on export cash crops (1963:14). The evidence from Windsor Forest would seem to agree with this, and I feel it can be seen as a further indication that farmers are not motivated entirely by the profit motive and financial incentive, since provision farming can easily be more profitable than rice and the farmers have evidence of this. Rather they tend to continue to see things within a conventional framework of what is appropriate agriculture for them. Also, where they have altered their emphasis, as in the case of the move from provisions to cane in the backlands, they have chosen to be associated with a crop which, like rice, has a large, comprehensive and authoritarian bureaucracy associated with it, which offers them support and guidance. It is also striking that in Nan's co-operative much less interest was shown in the half of the land allocated to provisions, despite the fact that this was known to be profitable and successful. This, I believe comes from the traditional structure of activities of the village, which in turn comes from the heritage of the Plantation Society.

A similar situation can be seen in connection with cattle. On this Dumont commented:

"Stock-raising in Guiana's coastal region may be described as 'East Indian' type. The animals are held more or less for tradition's sake, and are maintained as a form of savings against the time when an urgent need for cash may arise, or to provide dowries for children."

(Dumont 1963:14)

He also goes on to say something that is of significance not only for our understanding of the cattle industry, but also of much of Windsor Forest's recent history:

"Furthermore, Guiana's peasant is first and foremost a crop grower, not a livestock farmer. Thus, as soon as a piece of land is sufficiently drained, he would never dream of establishing an improved pasture, but will immediately turn it into a paddy field. In doing so, he is only carrying on in a way the sugar plantation tradition, where the approach was in terms of exports and not of cattle for domestic consumption."

(Dumont 1963:15)

This is a powerful indication of the heritage of the Plantation Society, yet during the colonial period there was a considerable amount of effort put into raising the standards of cattle in the area. From the earliest times of the estate coming under the control of Government land was allocated for a cattle pasture at the beginning of the rice cultivation. This land consisted of 182 acres and has never been used for anything else, as can be seen from the the original cane beds that shape the topography of the land. In the past a considerable amount of interest was shown in cattle, as is indicated by the frequent references to the overcrowding of the pasture that occur in official reports. On the other hand it is possible that the residents were only interested in the type of subsistence cattle activity that Dumont mentions.

Nevertheless the colonial officials made great efforts to increase the quality of the herd in the post-war period, by building stalls, laying on water, setting out grass plots and providing regular veterinary treatment. Smith mentions that these facilities were not fully or assiduously used (1957:505) and their potential not fully developed. Yet there are indications that the 'demonstration effect' of these improvements was very clear, for in the post-war years Windsor Forest shipped considerable amounts of milk to the processing plant in Georgetown.

Huggins had already mentioned (1941) the extent to which the farmers of Vreed en Hoop were able to augment their income by catering to the milk market in Georgetown across the river, and so it is likely that this was a profitable enterprise. Table 5/9 gives the details of milk shipments in the post-war period.

TABLE 5/9
MILK SHIPMENTS TO GEORGETOWN

<u>Year</u>	<u>Gallons</u>
1948	1,945
1949	5,452
1950	8,218
1951	9,131
1952	5,836

Source: Annual Reports of the Commissioner of
Lands & Mines 1948-52

Unfortunately details of these only occur for a short period in the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Land & Mines and so the picture is very incomplete. Nevertheless, it does show the extent to which the West Demerara Estates were contributing to

the milk supply of Georgetown, with the overwhelming proportion of the output coming from Windsor Forest.

By 1972 the situation had changed, with the pasture neglected, the stalls broken down and no milk shipments at all to the city. There were 92 households who had cows, with a total animal population of 267 (with a modal number of 2 per household). These were kept purely for producing milk for domestic consumption, just as Dumont predicted. Yet at the same time the demand for milk in the city was so great, and the supply so short, that the pasteurising plant was forced to make reconstituted milk from imported milk powder and many people relied on imported tinned milk.

Thus in this situation the villagers were not so innovative and not so keen to seize the opportunities that were to hand, despite the fact that the system had been set up and shown to be successful. When asked why the milk trade had declined farmers explained it in terms of being more interested in rice, disliking the regulations about purity of milk and the cleanliness of the stalls, as well as the veterinarian inspection of their animals. Whilst these problems were real ones they were no more irksome or intractable than those faced by those who planted rice. Rather they seem to support Dumont's assessment of the narrow way in which the farmer's assessed what was appropriate agricultural activity for them and what would 'compensate' as an economic activity. Yet again the effects of the Plantation Society and its restricting horizons can be seen.

This helps to explain, therefore, why the farmers of Windsor Forest were so willing to invest and innovate in the relatively unprofitable

rice industry, because this was something with which they were familiar and which was related to an existing institutional structure which supported them and to a large extent carried them along. For although rice farmers see themselves as independent and the general structure of activity is centred on the individual family farm, it is possible to see them from another standpoint. Barnett, in his study of the Gezira scheme, has pointed out (1977:175) that when peasant farmers are related to a monolithic system like that found in the Gezira they cease to be effectively independent entrepreneurs and become more like employees. Many of the same characteristics are to be found in Guyana where the RMB plays an all-pervading role, and where the sugar estates seem set fair to continue their dominant rôle in relation to the growing numbers of peasant cane farmers. In the case of Windsor Forest where the Government's power, in the form of the control of the drainage and irrigation system, is even more apparent, the model fits even better.

Thus the farmers are constrained by an agricultural environment which, because of the pattern of drainage and irrigation, is difficult to alter, which is administered by a benign but all-powerful administration and which in turn offers incentives and advice on how agricultural advance can be made by investing more and more in rice production. It is therefore not difficult to see why the farmers of Windsor Forest continued to be attached to rice and to become so committed to its mechanised cultivation.

However this commitment has serious long-term implications for the overall economic progress of the community and for the economy as a whole, for as Mandle has pointed out:

"This low-income industry was not able sufficiently to absorb labor, and it did not return incomes or provide the kind of work experience essential to development."
(Mandle 1973:138)

Similarly Berrill warned that "agriculture, and particularly peasant rice production, can provide no long term solution to the country's needs" (1961:4). The significant change came when the process produced some unforeseen consequences, the displacement of labour, and the residents were forced to seek alternative sources of income. Here the opportunities of urban work came to the rescue, but at the price of further dependency on the Government, for, as we shall see, 40% of the adult men of the village have full-time work out of the community now, and 53% of those work for Government in some way.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has attempted to chronicle what has been the most significant change in the community. In the past fifteen years the cultivation of rice has been literally transformed, though there are indications that this has been achieved at some cost. In general, however, we can see that:

- 1) The farmers have indicated a thoroughly 'modern' outlook in that they have been willing to make rational investment decisions about their economic activities. They have also shown a commensurate willingness to innovate, too readily one might argue, and a firm conviction about the virtues of modern technology.
- 2) However this alone is not enough to explain the pattern of change in local agriculture, for they have not shown the same willingness to innovate as far as other crops are concerned, and yet this is what Smith imagined they would have to do in

the future (1957:519). We therefore need to look at the context in which the investment decisions were made in order to see why they took the form they did.

- 3) This reveals a considerable amount of Government encouragement and pressure to expand both the area under cultivation and total output in the postwar era in order to meet the demands of the new protected market in the West Indies. Latterly this has taken the form of favouring the planting of newer varieties of padi more suitable for the profitable white rice market. All of these changes have involved the use of more and more sophisticated inputs, in the form of seed, fertilisers, mechanised ploughing and mechanised reaping. Combined with price incentives such a range of pressures amounted to a powerful inducement to continue investing in rice, even though it had been shown continually to be a low-profit crop.
- 4) On the other hand the Government was restricted in its scope for action, for although it was powerful in comparison with the local rice farmers, it was limited in what it could do towards radically altering the economy in the colonial period. Given the inability of the later Jagan regimes to tackle the entrenched position of the sugar interests it could be argued that the rice industry was the only area where innovation could affect the economic prospects of the mass of the people, whilst at the same time absorbing the burgeoning population (Mandle 1973). It also had the effect of rewarding the PPP's main constituency. Nevertheless, Government was very short of development aid and lacked the professional planning infrastructure to produce a total plan, whilst at the same

time being subject to the pressures of the large machinery importers. Thus it embarked on a programme of encouraging mechanisation but without the resources to regulate it at the local level. It also lacked the resources and political power to implement a programme of land reform at the same time to ensure that the new system of cultivation was soundly based.

- 5) Furthermore the technical innovations had implications beyond the mere operations they performed. For the net effect of the move to mechanised cultivation was to displace labour from the industry. The female labour was effectively absorbed in the domestic situation for the most part, whilst younger females growing up without experience of field labour have been able to take advantage of this to remain at school longer and now to have the educational qualifications to aspire to employment in prestigious urban white collar jobs as secretaries, clerks and shop assistants. To this extent the displacement of female labour can be seen as a form of rising living standards that allowed Indian females to behave in ways that approximated more closely to the values of 'respectability' current in wider creole society.

- 6) In the case of male labour displaced in this way the situation was less happy, in that there were no obvious outlets in the traditional sources of supplementary income, such as casual labour for government agencies. This meant that they had to seek new and more permanent sources of income, which in effect meant urban work.

In this Chapter I have sought to examine the context in which the decisions concerning the technical innovations and changes to rice

cultivation in the village were made. It is possible to see these as an example of dependent decision making, as villagers made decisions in a context determined by forces external to the community. This environment can be seen as being influenced by a continual chain of interests ranging from the politicians and civil servants in London who devised the plan for the allocation of the West Indian rice market to Guyana, through the international companies interested in selling the machines and equipment on which the output of the industry came to depend, to the colonial politicians and officials in Georgetown who implemented the programmes of prices, loans and facilities that actually influenced the farmers to innovate. Furthermore, international political considerations also had a role to play, so that the lucrative Cuban market emerged as part of the Jagan Government's socialist strategy, and just as rapidly disappeared with Jagan's fall from power. With such a spread of interests it is perhaps not surprising that not all of these were congruent with the interests of the farmers of Windsor Forest, but the pressures for technical innovation continued to be exerted on the latter regardless, with results that were not always beneficial.

It is also necessary to see the pressures for innovation in a communal context as well as a structural one. The processes of change are often presented as being essentially concerned with the individual, though the material from Windsor Forest points to the need for an additional perspective. For not only did farmers try to gain a broad spread of advice and opinion before making decisions on matters such as the move over to new varieties, but were also constrained by communal pressures. Not only were they well aware of the positive prestige benefits to be obtained from the ownership of a tractor, for

example, but were also aware of the negative pressures exerted on those who did not conform to new ways. Under the new timetable created by mechanised cultivation it was important for farmers in the same area to be at the same stage of cultivation, which meant that those wishing to remain with the old cultivation practices would have a very difficult time.

Furthermore the farmers' attitudes to changes and their economic strategies concerning agriculture were affected by another dimension of communal pressure, the system of ethnic values. I have suggested that the villagers' attitudes to rice can be seen as part of Indian ethnic identity: they 'know' rice. This in turn has tended to blind them to the economic benefits that could come from the cultivation of other crops, examples of which are readily available. Thus the farmers of Windsor Forest can be seen as operating and making decisions in an environment largely created by commercial and political forces external to the community, but at the same time also influenced by the traditions of their ethnic identity. This also largely explains why the changes in the rice industry took the form that they did. In such an environment the conventional models of 'modernisation' can be seen to be excessively simplistic and hardly appropriate.

As has been shown, the outcome of the innovations in rice cultivation did not always have the effects that were intended, leading to a decline in the profitability of rice cultivation in many cases. This in turn had the effect of obliging increasing numbers of farmers to supplement their income with regular employment out of the village. However, in this case they did not turn to the traditional

sources of such employment, the sugar estates and the Drainage and Irrigation Board. Rather they became increasingly involved in urban employment. This in turn had implications beyond the village, for in the Guyanese system of ethnic specialisation the urban areas had traditionally been seen as the preserve of the African ethnic group. Such a penetration by another ethnic group was likely to be seen as a threat to their economic security, and in turn to be reflected in political action at the national level. It is to this problem that I now turn.

CHAPTER SIX

WORK AND BUSINESS

- Introduction
- Traditional Employment Patterns
- The Beginnings of Change
- Shops
- The Growth of Urban Employment
- Getting a Job
- Non-Government Employment
- Clerical and Related Workers
- Female Economic Activity
- Female Employment
- Reactions and Problems
- Businesses
- Local Employees
- Local Female Economic Activity
- Summary and Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter is concerned with the economic effects of the move to mechanised cultivation. As was seen in the previous Chapter, the change in the system of production had the effect of displacing labour from the cultivation of rice. This labour, both male and female has sought employment out of the village as an economic response to the changed situation. In addition to the labour forced to seek employment to supplement an increasingly inadequate income from rice farming, there are growing numbers of young people who are sufficiently well educated to compete for the clerical jobs becoming available in the expanding bureaucracies of Georgetown.

Thus the village has responded to the declining profitability of the rice industry by turning increasingly to full-time urban employment. This is a marked deviation from the traditional rural Guyanese practice of seeking supplementary income from casual work on sugar estates or from Government agencies such as the Drainage and Irrigation Board. Furthermore, among the growing numbers of urban workers are to be found increasing numbers of women, especially unmarried girls. This is a very marked innovation for Indians and represents a potential challenge to the traditional role of women in Indian rural communities.

The move to urban work also has implications outside the community, for in the context of the spatial distribution of ethnic groups in Guyana the urban areas have traditionally been seen as an African preserve. Thus the increasing involvement of villagers in urban work means increasing involvement with Africans as fellow workers, a situation that traditionally did not exist in the village.

Furthermore, Africans are increasingly likely to perceive this intrusion of Indians as a threat to their economic preserve, which in turn is likely to find a reflection at the level of national political action.

TRADITIONAL EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

Traditionally agricultural work in Guyana has been seasonal and part-time. One of the main concerns of the sugar estates was to maintain a pool of accessible and under-occupied labour on which they could draw when necessary (Mandle 1973, Adamson 1972, Bartels 1977, Smith 1962:50). As has been seen in the case of the growth of the rice industry over the past two decades or so, the frequent desire of officials and planners to create a 'professional' rice farming peasantry has been illusory (R. Dumont 1963, Huggins 1941, Richardson 1970).

Today rice farming remains a part-time occupation for the majority of farmers, and the effects of the changes of the past decade or so will help to ensure that it remains so. For the effect of mechanisation is, as we have seen, to reduce the labour inputs required for cultivation and the commitment to mechanisation is now so entrenched that the effects of this process will continue to be felt. If this mechanisation is handled correctly, that is with appropriate land-holding patterns and balanced machinery inputs, then the economic benefits can be considerable; but, as we have seen, this is by and large not how the move to mechanisation was experienced in Guyana generally and in Windsor Forest in particular. When this pattern is set against the very high infrastructural costs of agricultural production on the Guyanese coastland, combined with the inherently low

profitability of rice cultivation (Dumont 1963), then it becomes apparent that rice farmers are likely to find it increasingly difficult to support a family on the returns from rice alone. This is certainly true of Windsor Forest, where the average rice land holding of less than 6 acres is too small to provide an income that will support a family, given that the average size of households planting rice is six persons. The need to supplement rice income with some form of outside employment therefore continues to be as pressing as it always was for most farmers.

In the past the main sources of alternative income were large and regular employers of labour. In effect this meant the sugar estates and Government. Although casual work on the estates has been a traditional activity throughout the country and was referred to in the past as a characteristic of Windsor Forest (Huggins 1941, Smith 1957), it has been of declining significance as far as the village is concerned for some time. Partly this is due to the fact that the nearest estates are not convenient to reach from the village and, more importantly, since one of the major efforts of the sugar industry since the war has been to stabilise the labour supply (Ruebens & Ruebens 1963), the chances for distant casual labour were thereby reduced. Thus even in the 1950s Smith did not find this a major source of income (R.T. Smith 1957). In 1972 only 9 people worked on sugar estates, with only 5 of them being cane cutters, the remainder having jobs such as general labourers, clerks etc. All of them worked on a regular basis.

With the environmental characteristics of the Guyanese coastal plain it is not surprising that there should be a need for a continual

programme of infrastructural maintainance. The most obvious problem is that of sea defences, with the need to maintain the sea wall being amply demonstrated by the early history of Windsor Forest, where the innundation by the sea led to its abandonment. Associated with coastal defences is the drainage system on which agriculture on the coast is so dependent. The need to keep the trenches and drains clear and to maintain the sluices and kokers that control the flow of water, as well as the general overseeing of the running of the system is a perennial task, for failure to maintain the system soon leads to greatly reduced efficiency.

Since the establishment of the Government Estates they have been maintained at a higher level than that of the surrounding private estates, and although there was a regime of minimal expenditure between the wars, the general level has been high, as the deficits in Table 1/1 show. This maintainance was carried out under the supervision of the resident Lands & Mines staff by a small core of regular employees backed up by a fluctuating body of labourers and craftsmen recruited for specific tasks, with the cleaning of trenches the most common one. This would therefore have provided a fairly reliable source of income for the village and even today there are a number of men who make a steady income from a continual flow of 'casual' employment on sea defences and drainage maintainance.

With the presence of the railway connecting the village with the Demerara ferry and Georgetown the possibility of other sources of income was available. The railway itself did provide employment for a number, and these jobs were eagerly sought after, but hard to obtain since there was a lot of competition from elsewhere, particularly

Africans. Although there was some contact with the Georgetown job market it was not great - some had business connections there and the Boodhoos had their store in the city. They do not seem to have provided as much employment as one might have imagined, apparently preferring to recruit from the city. Some fortunate children won scholarships to secondary schools and eventually obtained clerical jobs in the city, but the numbers were small. Thus even in 1956 Smith portrays the village as having only peripheral connection with the city's economic system, with only 60 people having non-farming occupations. Furthermore when assessing the economic prospects for the community the possibility of increasing external employment is not considered (R.T.Smith 1957:).

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHANGE

In the late 1950s and early 1960s this situation began to change. One of the most significant factors was the expansion of the rice industry under the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) Governments and the benefits of political patronage. The Rice Marketing Board was an important agency of Government policy in this area, setting prices, underwriting loans, encouraging higher standards of production and channeling resources back to the industry via the Rice Producer's Association. It is therefore not surprising that involvement in its activities should be allocated on the basis of political identity - which in the case of Guyana meant race. Despres (1967) shows clearly the way in which the PPP used the Rice Marketing Board (RMB) in this way, as indeed have the Peoples National Congress (PNC) since. This has had its deleterious effects, and several farmers commented to me that they felt bitter about the way the industry had suffered as a result of the RMB being such a convenient source of political

patronage.

The significance of the RMB as a source of employment for Windsor Forest can be seen if we compare RMB employees with others in the village. There are 35 people in the village employed by the Board, and of the 31 for whom I have the date on which they started work there, the median duration of employment is 10.4 years, with the longest serving person being employed since 1953. By contrast the median duration for all other forms of employment is 3.8 years. This contrast between the RMB employees and others is borne out over a range of types of job, as Table 6/1 shows.

TABLE 6/1

Rice Marketing Board Employees and Other Employees:
Median years of Employment

	RMB EMPLOYEES		OTHER EMPLOYEES	
Job Classification	N	Median Years	N	Median Years
Labourer	22	10.5	72	3.0
Semi-skilled	2	10.0	64	3.3
Skilled	2	10.5	52	2.7
Clerical	5	10.25	63	3.1
TOTAL	31		251	

As we have seen the 1950s were a time of economic and political advance for Indians, and this new found affluence and self-confidence found outlets in a number of areas. On the material level it meant that rice farmers now acquired the degree of comfort and convenience that had for some time been common enough in estate communities, such as substantial wooden houses, furniture, sewing machines and even kerosene stoves (Smith 1964:319). On the economic level the extra income from rice, especially for those with a sizeable acreage, could be invested commercially in productive enterprises such as shops and taxis, or more diffusely in the education of children, especially sons, for better jobs (Smith 1957:506).

The way this worked is illustrated by the case of two brothers who lived close to me in the village and who had been teenagers in the period of expansion. One went to secondary school where he obtained GCE and went on to a secure clerical job in Georgetown which had allowed him to buy a small car. The other continued in the local school and later helped his father with the family rice land, and by common agreement inherited his father's land and a tractor. The brothers continued to live in two halves of a large house with their respective families and got on well together, although just as I left the field the farmer brother was completing a large new house on an empty lot next to his old one. This was generally held to be an equitable distribution of family resources.

Smith also quotes the case of a family where the three brothers shared the family land so that one could emigrate to Britain and the remaining two would have the rice land (Smith 1957:506). After nearly twenty years away the brother returned to marry during my time in the

village. There was general dissatisfaction with his performance, voiced clearly by the brothers, for he appeared to have drifted from one labouring job to another and so had not been able to buy a house. Nor had he even taken out British citizenship, though he was certainly eligible, though he now intended to do both. It was generally felt that the family had not got a good return on this 'investment' since he was not in a position to aid the family financially, apart from occasional gifts of money to his aged mother, nor to help the other members of the family to emigrate to somewhere with more economic opportunity.

SHOPS

More conventional opportunities for investment available in the community and mentioned by Smith were shops and taxis, in addition to the obvious options of further rice land and more equipment, both of which were attractive to many farmers. For those not willing, or able, to invest in rice, shops provided a popular way of absorbing extra income. At present there are 25 shops in the village as follows:

TABLE 6/2

Types of Shops in Windsor Forest 1972

Cakeshops	11
Grocery	9
Dry goods	3
Stores	2

Of the 11 cakeshops, 5 were less than five years old and only three were established in the 1950s. It appears that there was a progression for some from these small and not very profitable shops selling cakes, soft drinks, cigarettes, school notebooks and a few patent medicines, to more substantial grocery and dry goods businesses. This is also the realm of the longest-established businesses in the village, stemming from the times when people bought only the most essential items, and the frivolities of the cakeshops could not be supported. One grocery has been in the same hands since 1930 and another dates from 1948, while both the stores are run by members of families that have been in the business for as long as can be remembered. Finally the three dry goods shops date from the 1950s.

The dry goods and grocery shops tend to stock more of the essential items villagers need. Groceries stocked tinned food, oil for cooking, and items such as vegetables not obtainable in the local market. The dry goods shops concentrated on materials, clothes, shoes, hardwares and utensils etc, whilst the stores stocked all of these and were the most comprehensive establishments in the village.

By 1972 all shops reported a universally dismal situation, with low profit levels and increasingly empty shelves. Certainly some of them looked in very sad decline. In part this was a result of the banning by Government of the importation of 102 food items in 1971, including potatoes and tinned fish, which were stock items for all village shops. In an effort to conserve foreign exchange the Government had also established the Foreign Trade Bureau which was taking over the importation of all items. This had not worked well and there were frequent shortages of key food items such as cooking oil, garlic,

margarine and tinned milk, which greatly added to the problems of shopkeepers.

However this was not all, for the Government had established fixed retail prices for most of these items, which unfortunately bore little relation to what the shopkeepers had to pay to obtain them. This resulted in an unofficial, and illegal, price for many items. To combat this there were teams of price inspectors constantly on the outlook for violations of the price code. Convictions were common and fines swingeing, often reaching \$1,000 or more. Shopping thus became something of a covert operation, since shops would only sell to those they knew and trusted, since they had to sell at the unofficial price to make a living. It is not surprising therefore, that under the circumstances shopkeeping was not seen to be the good investment it once was. Since 1972 the situation has got even worse, with more centralisation and hours of queueing for even the most basic food items.

The only types of retail enterprise that showed no signs of diminished appeal were the rum shops. There were originally two of these in the village, as well as a 'club' - a rather bleak drinking place that never had any official membership that I discovered. The main ones were associated with other shops (a grocery and a cakeshop) and were both run by Chinese. They were to an extent eclipsed in 1972 by the opening of a new rumshop as part of a large new house and shop built on the site of the old logie or barracks that had been burned down in the disturbances, right in the middle of the village.

This enterprise was owned by an Indian and caused intense interest,

since the husband was a Hindu villager who had run off with the wife of a Muslim shopkeeper who still lived near to where their new establishment was built. In the ten years that they had been away they had run a shop in Georgetown and had made enough to return to the village in style. The expected trouble with the wife's former husband did not materialise, though their building did cause controversy in other areas.

The site of the logie was very large and very central, and for some time it had been hoped that an enterprising (and presumably wealthy) businessman would build a cinema there, but this came to nothing. When the nature of the intended business was revealed some of the more respectable members of the community objected to the noise and disturbance that would follow, and to the unsavoury history of the couple concerned. Nevertheless the enterprise went ahead and was opened with a katha, which was well attended with a good turnout of respectable citizens. The rumshop then did tremendous business, for not only was it larger and brighter than the others, but also had a kitchen in which fried chicken and other food could be prepared. Furthermore it had the unique advantage of possessing a jukebox or 'punch-box' as it was more commonly called, filled with records from Indian films, which amply fulfilled the worst fears as far as noise was concerned.

THE GROWTH OF URBAN EMPLOYMENT

As we have seen the bubble of the rice industry's prosperity burst in the mid 1960s, with the fall of the Jagan Government in 1964, the ending of the Cuban market and the slashing of prices. This also coincided with the onset of the final stages of mechanisation in rice

farming in the village, with 1960 having been the most popular year for the purchase of tractors (see Table 5/2) Only the combines were missing from this equipment mix, and they too were added soon after. Thus the downturn in the profitability of rice farming, both nationally and locally, coincided with the intensification of the process of labour displacement from rice cultivation in the local area. It is therefore not surprising that we should find villagers increasingly seeking alternative sources of income.

The seasonal allocation of public works employment was not a viable option, since this tended to be 'spoken for' and even so did not provide the kind of regular income that was needed. The other traditional sources of income in the area were either part-time too, like tailoring, carpentry and rice factory work, or required capital, like shops and taxis. As we have seen the shopkeeping enterprise did not offer an impressive prospect, although in the mid 1960s this was not yet fully apparent, and cakeshops did continue to open during this period.

The labour that was displaced from rice cultivation by mechanisation was of two kinds. On the one hand there were the women who had in the past had done much of the transplanting of seedlings and the harvesting of the crop by hand. For some time they had been less involved in the transplanting as this practice died out with the growth of mechanised ploughing and a move to the 'shying' of germinated seed. Nevertheless they continued to be actively involved in the harvesting of the 'crop whilst this continued to be done by hand.

The other kind of labour displaced by mechanisation was that of the younger sons who had traditionally helped their father with the cultivation. This kind of work does continue to be done and they are likely to have a role to play in the family farming enterprise. However, what has changed is the critical role that such labour used to play (Smith 1957:507, O'Loughlin 1958). Now with mechanisation not only were they not needed to the same extent, but often the farm could not support them when they wanted to get married. Their need for a regular and significant source of income became acute with the downturn in the prospects for the rice industry and it was inevitable that they should look for their income in regular employment out of the community. This is clearly indicated by Table 6/3, which shows that some 69% of non-local labourers started work in the late 1960s or early 1970s.

These are all full-time jobs outside the community and as unskilled labouring work would have been the ones offering the widest scope to rural workers. The boom in employment from the mid 1960s onwards is reflected in all other types of economic activity reported in Table 6/3, though some of these have slightly different reasons for their growth, and will be discussed later.

We can, however, note that the rate at which jobs were being started in the early 1970s was in many cases (including that of the labourers) twice as high as that for the late 1960s. This means that twice as many people started these jobs in the two and a half years from 1970 to mid-1972 (when the census was collected) as did in the five years from 1965 to 1969. The indications are therefore that the process is far from over.

TABLE 6/3 (A)

DATES OF COMMENCING EMPLOYMENT - MALES

Occupation	Before 1949		1950- 1959		1960- 1964		1965- 1969		1970- 1970-		TOTALS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Part-time Local Labour	3	23.1	2	15.4	2	15.4	2	15.4	4	30.8	13	4.1
Full-time Local Labour	1	2.4	6	14.3	2	4.8	12	28.6	21	50.0	42	13.2
Fishermen	-	-	-	-	1	25.0	-	-	3	75.0	4	1.3
Non-Local Labourer	2	2.2	11	12.0	12	13.0	35	38.0	32	34.8	92	28.8
Semi- Skilled	3	6.0	4	8.0	9	18.0	23	46.0	11	22.0	50	15.7
Skilled	-	-	7	13.2	1	1.9	20	37.7	25	47.2	53	16.6
Clerical	-	-	3	7.9	8	21.1	14	36.8	13	34.2	38	11.9
Teachers	-	-	2	18.2	-	-	4	36.4	5	45.5	11	3.4
Technical & Professional	-	-	1	6.2	-	-	6	37.5	9	56.2	16	5.0
TOTAL	9	2.9	36	11.3	35	11.0	116	36.4	123	38.6	319	100.0

With the need to obtain full-time employment it was inevitable that the young men would try to follow in the footsteps of those who had already obtained work at the RMB. However by this time the régime had changed and now the RMB jobs were going elsewhere. They thus needed to look to alternative sources and it is significant that they did not turn to the sugar estates as their fathers had done. In part this was because of the policies of the estates who favoured resident labour, but also in part because of an aversion, bordering on revulsion, for sugar work, exhibited by many young men. Their orientation was now towards Georgetown and their problem was to obtain regular work there. With the RMB now largely closed other strategies had to be developed.

TABLE 6/3 (B)

DATE OF COMMENCING EMPLOYMENT - FEMALES

	Before 1949		1950- 1959		1960- 1964		1965- 1969		1970-		TOTALS	
Occupation	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Part-time Local Labour	1	7.7	4	30.8	3	23.1	4	30.8	1	7.7	13	17.6
Full-time Local Labour	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	75.0	1	25.0	4	5.4
Non-Local Labourer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	100.0	2	2.7
Semi- Skilled	-	-	-	-	1	7.7	3	23.1	9	69.2	13	17.6
Clerical	-	-	1	3.3	3	10.0	16	53.3	10	33.3	30	40.5
Teachers	-	-	1	14.3	3	42.9	2	28.6	1	14.3	11	14.9
Technical & Professional	1	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.4
TOTAL	2	2.8	6	8.6	10	14.9	28	40.0	24	34.3	74	100.1

Inevitably this meant turning to Government in some way, since not only was it the largest employer in the city, but was also expanding its activities as part of the new régime's programme. Despite the seeming disadvantages that Indians would be expected to suffer in such a relationship, this movement has been successful, although not easy. Thus of the 339 full-time male employees in the village, 149 (44%) work for central Government and its agencies. If local Government is added then the number goes up to 174 and 51.3%. In addition there are 19 men who are currently working on Government sponsored projects, such as the rebuilding of the sea wall and the construction of a silo next to the village, and if they too are included the number reaches

193 and 57% All these are males and predominantly young, since this is where the problems of employment and income are most acute. In the case of females the picture is somewhat different, with only 10 (16.4%) of 61 full-time employees working for Government, but more will be said about this later.

Furthermore those who work for Government are also part of a general trend towards regular employment. Some 339 men have regular employment, either locally or elsewhere, and represent 52% of the Indian male population aged from 16 to 60. This category excludes those who take seasonal or casual work locally and covers full-time local labourers, non-local labourers, semi-skilled, skilled, clerical, technical employees and teachers. If we look at the situation from the point of view of age then the pattern is even more pronounced, with the younger men being heavily dependent on regular work, as is shown in Table 6/4.

If we look at these same people in terms of where they work we find that some 274 men have regular employment out of the village, including conventional employees and those (6) who were employed by their families on a full-time basis. These employees working regularly out of the village represent some 42% of the Indian male 16 to 60 age group. If we include business interests as well, then the number goes up to 308 and 47%. Not surprisingly Georgetown dominates the extra-village economic activity, so that 67% of those with employment or businesses out of the village have these in Georgetown. However if we restrict ourselves to employment only, then the proportion goes up to 72%, indicating yet again the significance of urban employment for male incomes.

TABLE 6/4

AGES OF MALE EMPLOYEES

Occupation	10-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50-59		60-69		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Part-time Local Labour	10	23.3	11	25.6	8	18.6	9	20.9	3	7.0	2	4.7	43	11.3
Full-time Local Labour	5	8.5	20	33.9	14	23.7	15	25.4	5	8.5	-	-	59	15.4
Fishermen	-	-	3	50.0	2	33.3	1	16.7	-	-	-	-	6	1.6
Non-local Labour	12	12.2	31	31.6	29	29.6	17	17.3	8	8.2	1	1.0	98	25.7
Semi-skilled	4	7.3	28	50.9	13	23.6	3	5.5	7	12.7	-	-	55	14.4
Skilled	12	21.4	24	42.9	16	28.6	2	3.6	2	3.6	-	-	56	14.7
Clerical	4	10.5	23	60.5	8	21.1	-	-	2	5.3	1	2.6	38	9.9
Teachers	1	9.1	7	63.6	3	27.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	2.9
Technical & Professional	-	-	11	68.7	4	25.0	1	6.2	-	-	-	-	16	4.2
TOTAL	48	12.6	158	41.4	97	25.4	48	12.6	27	7.1	4	1.1	382	100.0

The picture that is emerging so far is of a male population increasingly turning to paid employment as their main source of income, especially from the mid-1960s on, and at a rate that appears to be increasing. Within this pattern the workers are largely looking to Georgetown and Government and its agencies for their employment.

As Table 6/5 shows, this is particularly marked in the case of non-local labourers, where 82.6% work in Georgetown. This is a penetration second only to that of the technical & professional group, although the numbers are much greater (81 labourers compared with 14 technical and professional workers). Thus labourers now represent 41% of all males who work in Georgetown. That skilled and technical workers should seek employment in the city is not so surprising, but that labourers should also do so is, especially in view of the traditional sources of rural employment in the estates. The move to urban employment marks a clear break with this traditional pattern.

What type of work do these men do? It is interesting to note that the largest employer of Windsor Forest men, with 35, is still the RMB. However the second largest employer, with 32 men, is more surprising, for it is the Georgetown Town Council. The Council is also the second largest employer of labourers from the village, with 24 compared with the 26 at the RMB. Furthermore the Council workers are all manual workers who have started there since 1964. For the 31 Council workers for whom I have details, the mean year for starting their job is 1969, whereas for the RMB workers it is 1963, illustrating yet again the pattern of growing urban employment in the later 1960s.

TABLE 6/5

OCCUPATION AND PLACE OF WORK - MALE EMPLOYEES

	Windsor Forest		West Demerara		Georgetown		Other		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Part-time Local Labourers	37	86.0	6	14.0	-	-	-	-	43	100.0
Full-time Local Labourers	45	76.3	13	22.0	-	-	1	1.7	59	100.0
Fishermen	5	83.3	1	16.7	-	-	-	-	6	100.0
Non-Local Labourers	6	6.1	8	8.2	81	82.6	3	3.1	98	100.0
Semi-Skilled	7	12.7	14	25.5	33	60.0	1	1.8	55	100.0
Skilled	3	5.4	14	25.0	37	66.1	2	3.6	56	100.0
Clerical	4	10.5	4	10.5	29	76.3	-	-	38	100.0
Teachers	7	63.6	2	18.2	2	18.2	-	-	11	100.0
Technical & Professional	-	-	2	12.5	14	87.5	-	-	16	100.0
TOTAL	114	29.8	64	16.8	196	51.3	8	2.1	382	100.0

The most common activity for the Council employees was weeding, though there were several others who worked in refuse collection. Although labouring jobs predominate in the urban situation, the range of the others is considerable, as Appendix 3 shows. Apart from the expected messengers and security guards, there are drivers, clerks, nurses, accountants, electricians, mechanics, salesmen, engineers, welders and policemen.

GETTING A JOB

Obtaining such jobs, especially the less skilled ones, is a problem. For the process that I have described for Windsor Forest is being repeated in other villages along the coast, especially on the East Coast and East Bank of Demerara, where not only is transport more readily available but also cheaper since the Demerara River does not have to be crossed. In addition there are the existing residents of Georgetown and its suburbs, whose population has been booming in the past two decades, all of whom also need to find employment in the city. All of these factors greatly increase the competition which Windsor Forest aspirants face in their search for employment.

There is also the additional factor of race. The city has tended to be seen as the preserve of the Afro-Guyanese and they occupy the majority of the urban jobs as well as forming a majority of the population there. In addition the East Coast is the African 'heartland' (Potter 1970) with a long tradition of travel to the city for work. Finally there is the problem that race brings to patronage and preferment. Reference has already been made to the role of the RMB in this and there is a general feeling among Indians that Government jobs are primarily for Africans nowadays. However, given the fact that 46% of Indian male employees from Windsor Forest now work for Government and its agencies, it would seem that they have been markedly successful in their endeavours, especially since so many of them have started after the PNC came to power in 1964. How then have they managed to achieve this?

The universally recognised way to obtain a job (and many other things) in Guyana is through 'lines'. These are connections with

those in authority that will allow one to 'get tru' (through). Many people were happy to recount how the early jobs in the RMB had been secured in this way and then used as a bridgehead to get others in. Nowadays, with the changed regime these tactics are less effective and so other channels have to be used. One of the most effective has proved to be simple bribery. Although it is likely that this has long been a characteristic of Guyanese administration, there is near universal conviction that it has grown enormously since independence in 1966. Singh has expressed this very graphically when he says:

"In recent times corruption has reached fantastic proportions, tarnishing the integrity of cabinet ministers and threatening to turn the bureaucracy into a kleptocracy."

(Singh 1972:21)

Numerous people told of how they had paid bribes for their sons to get work and there was a general feeling that this was how jobs with the Town Council were to be obtained. However one informant gave me a very detailed description of how he had not only obtained one of these jobs without a bribe, but had also obtained promotion and security without one - though he did admit that he felt that he had been amazingly fortunate. Far more common were the tales of bribes paid and no jobs resulting.

Nevertheless the most reliable route to employment remained the use of 'lines', but with the new régime and the political history of the village such avenues were few. But as will be discussed more fully later, the Government was interested at this time in wooing Indians and their organisations, although on Government's terms, and such avenues were available to aspirants, though at a price. Several people had expressed their open support of the PNC, most noticeably the Chairman of the Local Authority. However, given the solidity of PPP

support in the village, the threat of condemnation for betrayal and the likelihood of public humiliation were enough to deter most potential followers.

More common were those who equivocated and tried to play the system both ways, by maintaining contacts with Government whilst at the same time trying to remain on good terms with fellow villagers. Several of the civil servants in the village, especially the senior ones (there were four of Assistant Secretary rank) were suspected of doing this, although in their case it was hard for villagers to judge. More widely known were the main religious leaders of both the Hindus and Muslims, both of whom were Councillors on the Local Authority. Both had good connections with their national religious bodies, which had long been the focus of considerable political pressure (Despres 1967). In addition the main priest of the Hindu Temple had a long history of sitting on official bodies, such as the Poor Law Board (usually known as the 'Pola Board') and so knew his way around the political hierarchy very well, having managed to get secure Government jobs for all his children.

These men were constantly being approached by those seeking work and their 'lines' gave them considerable influence in the community in addition to that derived from their religious status. Even though they did not have the complete power of patronage, their resources were nevertheless seen as being better than those of the supplicants. They thus very much approximated to the role of brokers, as described by Bailey (1969).

Finally there were those who took a completely instrumental view and openly played the political party game in a pragmatic way to obtain a job. The key factor here was the possession of a PNC party card, and the village was rife with stories of those who had not got jobs because they did not have a card, and of those who succeeded because they did have one. However very few would admit to actually having one for fear of condemnation, whilst those who did often sought to present it as having been obtained under duress. For it was widely believed, probably correctly, that in many Government agencies such as the RMB employees were obliged to join and pay subscriptions to the PNC. The number of cards actually held by villagers was probably quite small, but the suspicions were rife.

In fact PNC cards were not all that easy to obtain, especially for Indians, since the party knew full well why they were being sought. Undoubtedly the most effective way to obtain one would have been to join the Chairman's PNC group along with the Councillors, but this was a risky thing to do for a family man since this would have been construed as a very deliberate and public expression of commitment and would have brought a good deal of public condemnation on the man. On the other hand the Chairman refused to accept young boys merely seeking jobs, being only interested in recruiting people of some standing in the community.

An attempt to short circuit this situation occurred whilst I was in the village when it was realised by a few men that a PNC group had been formed in the village some time ago but had never got off the ground. After the elections for the Local Authority in 1970 there had been some dissatisfaction over the benefits that the Chairman had been

able to obtain and so he had founded his own group. Now the rump of the original group was seeking to re-establish itself and claim full party benefits. I was present at the first meeting of the reformed group which was attended by 21 members and aspiring members. They were all young and seeking jobs. The Chairman of the group claimed that they had 20 to 30 members, but that membership cards were taking six months to come through. They were anxious to establish their credibility with the central organisation and their separateness from the Local Authority group. However there was not one person of any political standing present and when the news of the meeting spread through the village it was derided as a laughable and rather pathetic attempt to play the system.

NON-GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT

However not all Georgetown workers are employed by Government, with the non-government employees exhibiting a wide range of occupations and employers, as Appendix 4 shows. In terms of jobs the men of Windsor Forest are to be found as clerks, carpenters, bartenders, drivers, mechanics, tailors, salesmen, welders, draughtsmen, laboratory technicians, college lecturers, supervisors and delivery roundsmen. They work for organisations ranging from large international insurance companies and the many branches of Bookers on the one hand, to small businesses on the other, with the whole range of indigenous organisations in between. There is even one man who is a messenger at the British High Commission.

One of the great advantages of working for a large organisation in Guyana is that it is often possible to get considerable job security. This particularly applies to clerical workers, but can also apply to

manual ones. Thus 72% of male clerical and similar workers described themselves as being a 'permanent' employee and 40.5% of manual workers did so. Whilst the manual category has a lower level of permanency than the clerical workers, it is nevertheless considerably better than the situation for the full-time local labourer group, only 17% of whom described themselves as permanently employed.

Whilst it is true that most of the secure jobs are with Government, by no means all are, and it is not at all unusual for workers with private firms to be formally given 'permanent' status after a year or two in regular employment. This is analogous to the 'staff' status to be found in some British firms and offers a number of worthwhile benefits. In particular the security of employment offers the chance of budgeting for a regular income as well as the benefits of paid holidays and sick leave. Thus urban employment, especially with large organisations, offers the possibility of regular income and secure employment across wide ranges of different skills and educational attainment within the village population.

CLERICAL AND RELATED WORKERS

However it is the clerical and other white collar workers who appear to have benefitted most from the opportunities offered by urban work. They form 23.7% of the male employees and as Table 6/4 shows they tend to be younger than the urban manual workers, with 71% being under the age of thirty. Of course they require higher educational qualifications than manual workers, and this is reflected in the fact that 58.5% of them have secondary education or higher (with six being university students as well). By contrast only 6% of manual workers have secondary education. However only 3.7% of these urban manual

workers have no education at all, compared with 16.8% of the purely local male labourers.

Some 42% of these clerical workers are employed by Government and Government agencies, which is very much the pattern one would expect to find. Altogether some 53% of males in this type of employment were clerks, with 75% of them (15 out of 20) being employed by Government. The next largest category were salesmen (8 or 21%), with the remainder composed of a range of occupations.

The next category are teachers, and as can be seen from Table 6/4 they are relatively young. In the case of male teachers 64% are still in their twenties, compared with only 45% of all workers. However in the case of female teachers their youth is even more marked, with 86% being in their twenties. In part this is due to the tendency for female teachers to give up work to have children, as is born out by the fact that 70% of them are single, compared to only 55% of male teachers. Male teachers also reported a higher level of 'permanent' employment status than women teachers (73% against 43% for females, though the numbers are small in both cases). However the absence of older female teachers is also a reflection of the relative lack of opportunities for such employment for female Indians in the past.

In part the apparent lack of security for teachers that this appears to indicate is caused by the practice by which prospective teachers are taken on as 'pupil teachers' straight from school and have to secure entrance to the Teachers Training College in Georgetown later. It is only after they have managed this and made progress on their courses and training secondment that they obtain the

relative security of permanency. Thus the initial years of a pupil teacher are fraught with uncertainty, although once training is underway things become less difficult.

The other main category of white collar workers are the technical and professional employees. This group is composed of senior civil servants, those with specific technical training such as nurses, technicians and the Local Authority Overseer and those with advanced specialist training such as an accountant and a transport economist. The village was unusual in having living there four civil servants of the Assistant Secretary level (though one left to live in Georgetown during my stay), whilst the economist was the Chairman's son who had trained in London. This indicates a greater degree of possible contact with the higher levels of the national administration than had been feasible in the 1950s, and this dimension of the community was noticeably exploited, as will be discussed later.

The white collar section of the working population are the most prestigious employees in the community. They tend to have the most secure employment, the most congenial working conditions and are accorded the most deference. They also tend to be the highest paid, although not always. Young clerks and pupil teachers are not at all well paid and the need to travel to the city and be smartly turned out can take a toll on their income. Nevertheless youths make a clear preference for this type of work in comparison with manual work, especially farming, and there is no shortage of aspirants to such jobs.

However those white collar workers who are well paid are amongst the highest earners in the village, and whilst there are undoubtedly some farmers and businessmen who are wealthier in terms of capital and resources, the salary earners have the advantage of a higher disposable income that can be used for consumption without the need for capital accumulation. Thus this group owns half of the private cars in the village (as opposed to hire cars) with only one rice farmer and four local businessmen being able to achieve this, compared with the seven cars owned by white collar workers. The remainder were owned by businessmen with interests out of the community (three).

By 1975 one tractor operator who relied on this for his living had also bought a car. He was unusual in that he and his wife had no children, and, as the Arya Samaj priest, had a claim to need the car for his religious work (though none of the other priests claimed this). There was a good deal of adverse comment in the village about this car, and the clear implication was that he was in danger of getting above himself. This was an accusation that was never levelled against the white collar car owners.

The homes of the better paid white collar workers also tended to be provided with more prestigious and convenient appliances and equipment. They had refrigerators, better furnishings, electric fans, showers, sewing machines, and items such as tape recorders and radios. One civil servant even had a movie projector and made himself very popular by showing to his friends and neighbours a collection of blue films he had borrowed from a colleague at work. Furthermore this group had a greater tendency to have been abroad, especially to the other Caribbean territories. Several technical people have been sent

on training courses to places like Jamaica and Trinidad by their employers, whilst civil servants are sometimes lucky enough to be sent on training trips to UK or Canada.

Senior civil servants are also fortunate to be able to take advantage of a legacy from colonial times which periodically allows overseas leave. After a number of years in a certain level it is possible to obtain paid passages for the employee and spouse to travel out of the country for several weeks, or even months. Only the highest officials are able to obtain fares as far as Europe or North America, but one civil servant in the village had been able to make a lengthy tour of several Caribbean islands in this way, which resulted in a number of friendships made en route, especially in Trinidad which also has a large Indian population.

He was thus able to offer hospitality to these people when they paid a visit to Guyana. However the Trinidadians did not like the country, sharing most of the Islanders' distaste for 'mudland', as Guyana is often called, and felt great pity for the Indians whom they considered backward and impoverished in comparison with those of industrialised and oil-rich Trinidad. They therefore did not pay any return visits, but were glad to offer hospitality to their poor benighted cousins from Guyana, and so not only did the civil servant himself return to Trinidad, but also several friends from the village went at different times, not all of them white collar workers. Some of them even went to sample the delights of Carnival and apparently enjoyed it enormously. It is therefore not so surprising that there are 21 people in the village who have been to Trinidad, more than have been to any other country.

There is then , on the one hand, a relatively small but significant section forming some 10% of the adult male population who have prestigious and well paid jobs. These people are successes in the terms of the wider society and have a profound effect on the hopes and aspirations of a large part of the population. On the other hand there is a much larger number of mainly young men taking labouring jobs to replace the income that no longer comes from rice work. There are also a significant number of older men seeking to support their families and sometimes to supplement their income from rice by full-time work.

The clear pattern for young men however is to seek a job, and not only do 70% of the Indian males aged 20 to 29 have regular employment but there is also continual concern expressed by teenagers and parents about obtaining such employment. As far as young men are concerned the days of working for their father on the family farm till they were able to marry and set up on their own have all but gone. As has been mentioned previously, they may come back to rice farming later, but their initial aspiration is now to find a job.

FEMALE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

However the movement to male employment is not the only changed feature of the Windsor Forest scene, for the women too have been on the move, both socially and spatially. Smith noted that in 1956 Indian women did not engage in paid work (R.T. Smith 1957), though as he commented after a return visit to Windsor Forest twenty years later, this has greatly changed (1978:356). For now 90 women have jobs or businesses that regularly take them out of the village, some 12.5% of the adult female population (16 to 60 years). Equally

significant is where they work and what they do, for 84% (73) of them work or have businesses in Georgetown.

Those who go to Georgetown fall into two categories, those who have a business and those who are employed, with each category representing a contrasting but related aspect of the position of Indian women today. The businesses are all connected with selling, mainly produce. Most commonly this is done at the markets in the city, such as Stabroek which is conveniently located next to the ferry stelling (or wharf). Thus 12 women are involved in selling there, whilst 18 more are based at the other main market at Bourda nearer the centre of the city. In addition there are three women who sell fish and vegetables throughout the city, mainly from door to door.

This involvement with the produce trade entails, on the one hand, a link with the traditional female role, for there is a distinct female involvement with retailing produce in the village. On the other hand the Georgetown trade is much bigger, more organised and more professional. The markets act as a wholesale clearing house for the distribution of produce within the city and the Windsor Forest women are involved in this, buying from farmers and others who bring produce in, as well as collecting and carrying it themselves sometimes. It is a tough and competitive business, and all the village women involved have a reputation for being sharp businesswomen. The amounts of money entailed can be large, though nobody was willing to be specific. Nevertheless the most successful appear to be doing very well from it and are probably the highest earning females in the village. The retailers, on the other hand, tend to earn less, though they also need less capital.

The women in this business tend to be in their thirties and forties (74%) and married (68%), although more of this category are widowed (24%) than any other of the economically active females. They also tend to have been engaged in this business longer than other such females, for of the 28 (of 30) engaged in the Georgetown produce trade about whom I have details, the median duration of their involvement in market selling is 6.5 years, whereas for females employed out of the village the median duration of employment is 3.0 years.

FEMALE EMPLOYMENT

By contrast the other kinds of economically active females are very different. They are employees and represent a very marked innovation as far as Indian women are concerned. There are 48 of them and they represent 53.3% of women who are economically active outside the village. They too predominantly work in Georgetown (75%), though they can be further divided into those who have manual occupations (30%) and those who have non-manual (70%).

Those who are engaged in manual occupations are overwhelmingly (14 out of 17, or 82%) employed in sewing factories making shirts and children's clothes. The clothing industry in general has been a significant employer of Indians, and all villages have a number of tailors and seamstresses. Windsor Forest has 33 of the former and 18 of the latter. These often operate on their own account and also as employees, although not in the village. Smith noted the way that the acquisition of a sewing machine was one of the earliest benefits of rising incomes in the 1950s (R.T. Smith 1964:319), and as has been mentioned it is still a common practice for girls to go on a course of sewing lessons given by one of the five sewing schools run by village women in their houses.

With the advent of cheap polyester fabrics from the Far East the output of manufactured and tailored garments seems to have boomed. It now seems that a concern about being fashionably dressed is as much a concern of young Indians as it has traditionally been felt to be a concern of Africans. There are entrepreneurs in the village who have exploited this demand and have opened small workshops in their houses employing a small number of people, although these establishments are mainly concerned with the production of baby and children's wear. In addition there are larger establishments in nearby villages, with the nearest some three miles away which has the whole ground floor devoted to a workshop for the sewing of shirts by 10-12 girls, two of whom come from Windsor Forest.

However more striking is the growth of a number of large establishments in Georgetown which are run by Guyanese entrepreneurs and which mass produce clothing for the city's stores. It is in these that the manual working females from Windsor Forest are employed. The establishments are well known and almost all people are conscious of them, often with strong opinions about them, as we shall see later. Certainly the establishments appear to have a dynamic and aggressive attitude to business, both in terms of the prices they charge and the way they treat their staff. Girls working there say that they have to work very hard and those that cannot stand the pace are fined. However some positively enjoy it and three are now permanently employed there, whilst all the others to whom I spoke found it preferable to being at home in the village.

What is most noticeable about these female employees, in contrast to the market women, is that they tend to be younger. Of the 14 such

workers, 5 (36%) are in their teens and 7 (50%) are in their twenties. As one would expect from this they have also been doing the work for a shorter time, with 54% having been employed for a year or less. They also tend to be married, with only 4 (29%) being single. There are however also two widows and two divorcees in this group, which points to a problems of economic necessity for such women.

The other female employees provide another contrast, for they are the non-manual ones. There are 31 of these and they represent 55% of all employed females. Of these 90% work in Georgetown and two thirds are employed as typists, secretaries and clerks in Government and commercial offices. The remainder are shop assistants, mostly in the larger Indian stores in the city. These female employees do share one characteristic with their manual employee sisters, in that they too are young, with 13% being in their teens and 68% in their twenties.

However, in contrast to the manual female employees and the market women, the non-manual females are predominantly single with 21 (68%) being so, compared with only 29% of female manual employees of very similar ages. They are also better educated than the latter, as one would expect, with 81% having completed the Junior Secondary section of the local school, and 10% having attended a Senior Secondary school. By contrast the manual employees have only 50% having completed the Junior Secondary and none having attended Senior Secondary school, whilst 43% of them only completed the Primary section of the local school. As one might well expect the self-employed market women have even lower educational attainments, with none having had any form of secondary education, only 59% of them having completed Primary and 38% having no formal education at all.

The clerical female employees also tend to have post-school vocational training, with 68% having some form of secretarial or business training of this sort. Most commonly this was obtained at a private Secretarial School, such as the one in Windsor Forest. This has been discussed previously and 29% of clerically employed females had received their training there. However there were also other such schools in Georgetown and they have a higher reputation, which was borne out by the fact that there were more female clerical employees who had been trained in those schools than from the local one. It was generally felt by girls and their parents that the city schools had more advantages and contacts than the local one, but they also cost more, both in terms of the fees they charged and the travelling costs involved. Nevertheless the evidence tended to bear this out, in that of the 25 girls who had trained in the local Secretarial School, 9 (39%) had jobs. In the case of the 23 who had attended Georgetown schools, 12 (57%) now had jobs. However, what is striking about both sets of figures is that no matter which school a girl attended there were a large proportion of the trainees who did not obtain the kind of work to which they were aspiring.

It was commonly said, usually by despairing parents who were obliged to pay, that attendance at a typing school was rapidly becoming a modern substitute for the more traditional attendance at a sewing school to round off a girl's education. But as the parents knew only too well, attendance at a typing school cost much more than a sewing school, and unless a job was forthcoming at the end the experience was likely to be much less useful than the possession of sewing skills. Nevertheless their daughters continued to clamour for such training and although there were more girls receiving sewing

training than commercial training, that too could nowadays lead to involvement in the urban employment pattern, as we have seen.

This is the most marked change since the picture of the 1950s presented by Smith. As he said, then Indian women did not go to work, but now they increasingly do. It is primarily the younger ones who do this, for not only are the self-employed women who trade in Georgetown older but they also include a number of widowed and divorced women who need a source of income and who are to an extent drawn to this kind of work because of a lack of alternative options for women with little education and few skills. They also tend to have been engaged in this for longer than the employed females, with 6 of the 28 engaged in this business (21%) having been doing it for more than 15 years; that is since the time Smith made his study in 1956.

The urban working females, on the other hand, represent a new phenomenon which stems from two significant factors in the society. Firstly the clerical workers in particular have benefitted from the extension of free education that has occurred since the war. As we have seen they tend to be better educated than other female employees and being young will have received their education more recently. There was a time when Indian women were frequently not educated (R.T.Smith 1962:ChapIV). This is also borne out by the fact that the women of Windsor Forest have a generally lower level of educational attainment than the men, especially the older ones.

However that situation now appears to have changed and the proportions of girls attending school is comparable to that of boys, and parents willingly enter into the expense of sending their

daughters to the Government's Senior Secondary School when they win places there. Nevertheless there does appear to be a feeling that it is more important for boys to succeed educationally, since it is presumed that they will be the main breadwinner in the future. It is therefore likely that parental enthusiasm for female education will drop off the higher up the educational system they go (there are as yet no female university students in the village, although there are six boys at this level). Despite this, as far as education to secondary level is concerned, either locally or in a special secondary school, parental encouragement of girls is very apparent.

The other factor which has allowed the development of this type of occupation is the growing involvement of Indians in national and urban processes. Although the coastal settlements of Guyana were established by a sophisticated and world market oriented capitalist system and the peasantries to be found there, both African and Indian, are 'reconstituted' in Mintz's terms without the full support of their traditional cultural backgrounds, the Windsor Forest portrayed by Smith for the 1950s nevertheless remains relatively isolated. Even though there were good rail and ferry connections to Georgetown, which was itself not far away, and even though there was nothing unusual in itself in going to town, the villagers remained relatively uninvolved. Relatively few people worked there and many villagers rarely went there, and even then tended to stick to certain streets. Now that situation has changed and is reflected in the urban employment of both men and women.

According to villagers one of the reasons why they did not feel at home in the town was because they looked like country people and felt

out of place. In the case of men this would have meant cotton drill trousers and possibly a white cotton smock called a kurtha, though this is now much less commonly seen than Smith reported, being chiefly worn by Hindu priests. They would also wear shoes with no socks and most noticable of all a trilby hat worn like a stetson and bleached to a pale beige by the sun. This is how farmers dressed in the village, though in the past it was even more common for them to go bare-footed.

In the case of women their dress too was distinctive, usually consisting of a dress with a fitted bodice, short sleeves and a long and very full skirt reaching almost to the ankles. This allowed them to squat decorously by tucking their skirt between their knees. On their head they wore a starched white kerchief tied round the forehead and knotted at the back, with the top tucked in the knot, thus giving the effect of a starched helmet that covered the whole head. This too is the kind of dress frequently seen in villages, although again shoes or sandals would be worn for going to town. It is still common to see men and women dressed this way in town, and they are immediately recognisable as country people.

By contrast the dress of younger people is markedly different and is much more urban and fashionable. The key factor here is the availability of synthetic fabrics at reasonable prices, and as a result both young men and women are more brightly and strikingly dressed than their parents. Young men wear brightly coloured shirts or 'shirtjacs', the latter being now the official male dress of Guyana and consisting of a short sleeved shirt in the style of a safari jacket, with large outside pockets, which is worn over the trousers.

The wearing of suits and ties, so long a noted feature of the 'neo-colonial mentality' of Guyanese (R.T. Smith 1962:Chap V), has completely disappeared. With the shirt are worn trousers, never shorts, and although there is a good deal of individual variation with stitching, raised seams and the like, to suit the wearer's fashion sense, trousers are always worn very tight.

The sewing of 'pants' has become the main activity of tailors with the demise of the suit and there is a sharp division between those who sew only for the older generation and those who cater for the younger men. It is now usual for the younger client to discuss the finer points of his design with his tailor, and there is a good deal of interest in experimentation. Young men 'lime' around the houses of the more popular young tailors and one has papered the inside of his workroom with cuttings from glossy magazines featuring not only clothes but also the life-style to which his clients aspire, with pictures of cars, hi-fi equipment and aeroplanes being the main elements.

The contrast between the appearance of the old and the young women is even more marked, and here too the emphasis is on fashion. The means of achieving this is also via synthetic fabrics, with polyesters and crimplenes being the most popular. Some of the larger city firms, especially the shops, insist on a uniform of blouse and skirt, but for office work and the other shops the employee's dress is her own affair. This enables her to dress in the accepted fashion which usually means a tight fitting dress in a bright colour with short sleeves and a wider scooped neck than the traditional dress. Furthermore, instead of coming to the ankles, it stops above the knee,

and well above in many cases. These dresses thus correspond very much to the mini-dresses and mini-skirts popular in the metropolitan countries in the late 1960s.

It is also now common for married women in their twenties and early thirties to wear such dresses, although theirs do tend to be of a more demure length than those of the younger unmarried girls. It is also usual for girls to decorate their hair with ribbons or strands of bright wool, and whilst the wearing of gold jewellery, especially earrings, is nearly universal, the wearing of makeup is not. The younger girls tend to do this, with the use of face powder being common and that of lipstick less so. More sophisticated makeup such as eye shadow is not common.

Older women look with disapproval on these developments and with disgust on the dresses, which they consider indecent and impracticable since they claim it is not possible to squat decently in them. However the girls have developed ways of doing this and continue to wear them on all occasions. That they have become standard wear can be judged from the fact that around the village it is possible to see such dresses downgraded to the level of 'house-dresses' and used for doing housework and the like. On the occasions when women work in the fields it is not uncommon to see them wearing such old dresses of the new style, just as young men can be seen going to the backdam in last year's fashionable outfit as it too is superceded.

A deep interest in fashionable dressing is one of the ways in which young people express their modernity and aspirations, and this in turn is indicative of a greater interest in and familiarity with national

cultural characteristics. However there are limitations on this and these will be discussed more fully later. Nevertheless there is no doubt that both boys and girls are positively oriented towards urban work, and in the case of girls this is considered a fashionable and glamorous life. They are attracted by the ability to wear smart clothes, to go to the city with its relative attractions compared with the village, to work in pleasant surroundings doing a 'modern' job and at the same time making money of their own. Whilst perhaps not as 'liberated' as some of their metropolitan sisters, as far as rural Indian women are concerned this represents a big change.

The secretaries and shop assistants, although they are predominantly young, also include five women in their thirties and one in her forties. These represent 19% of the female clerical employees, more than in any other employed female category. Several of these women spoke of the extent to which they were striving to continue in their occupation and the way in which it represented a form of liberation from the restrictions of the village as far as they were concerned. But at the same time it can be hard to combine a job and a family as the case of Una shows.

Una has worked for a large Indian store in Georgetown for seven years and basically she likes the work, but has found it a great strain. She has been living with her in-laws for nine years, a 'half-life' that she claims is killing her. She does not get on with her mother in law and to ease the strain she lives five miles away in Vreed en Hoop during the week with her family, which also makes it easier to cross to the city. She only comes to Windsor Forest at the weekends and at holidays. She is hoping that her husband, who is a

clerk in the RMB, will soon agree to build a house on a lot they have bought at the front of the village. But her husband is worried that if they do so he will lose his chance of getting his half of the mother's house lot (which he could sell to pay for his house), leaving his other brother to inherit the mother's remaining half lot and house.

The job too has its heavy pressures. She recently had a miscarriage and spent some time in hospital, during which time she had a lot of blood transfusions and was very unwell. However when she came out of the hospital on a Monday she received a summons from the manager of her shop and was back at work the following Saturday. If she had refused she was sure that she would have lost her job. Nevertheless 22 of the 31 female clerical workers described their position as permanent. At 73% this is higher than any other category of female employees.

However this version of the good life can only be secured by those who are reasonably well educated and who can also afford the secretarial school fees. For the academically less well qualified the sewing school and the sewing factory can represent a similar aspiration. There are 4 unmarried girls who sew in Georgetown, whereas there are 6 who are married, 2 divorced and 2 widows. In the case of the divorcees and the widows the work represents a much needed source of income, as it does for those women in a similar situation who trade in the city's produce markets. However for the 43% who are married the work can represent something else. It could mean welcome additional family income, or it could mean pin-money for the woman herself

On the other hand it could also mean access to the attractions of the city, for although the numbers of women involved in this work are not large (14), it nevertheless features prominently in the consciousness of both men and women. As has been mentioned before the firms who employ these women are well known to all, which is slightly surprising, in view of their distance from the village. It was also often presented as a recognised option for women seeking to make more money, in that it was quite often mentioned by women as something that they might consider doing. However the fact that relatively few did actually do it indicates that there is some resistance to sewing factories.

That this was so was borne out by the fact that several husbands in their twenties and thirties mentioned on different occasions that their wives had suggested that they should seek work in the sewing factories in Georgetown. The husbands were universally hostile to this and frequently retorted with a reply to the effect that if the wife wished to make some extra money she should plant vegetables for sale in the market or take in sewing at home. Although these are well recognised sources of female income they did not find favour in these cases, which suggests that there was something uniquely attractive about leaving the village and going to Georgetown.

REACTIONS AND PROBLEMS

Although the numbers of women who work in Georgetown or who have business there is relatively small, I nevertheless feel that this has a great symbolic significance for both males and females in the village. I have tried to show how this is especially true of the female employees, with the relative glamour of the commercial and

secretarial jobs being the most apparent, but with the humbler sewing work having its attractions too. This trend is frequently spoken of with condemnation by older women and with unease by men, indicating that males find urban work for their own sex acceptable, but feel that such work for females threatens male perceptions of traditional female roles and the way these reflect on the honour and respectability of the male members of the household.

On the one hand the threat is cultural in that paid work is an innovation as far as Indian women are concerned. Also the urban milieu is not only culturally alien but also affords women a degree of unsupervised freedom that can easily be resented by men. On the other hand the threat can be more immediate and physical. Throughout the Caribbean Georgetown has an unenviable reputation for a form of violent robbery known as 'choke and rob', with the problem reaching such proportions that the Government apparently instructed the newspapers that they were to print no more reports of such incidents. Most of these attacks appear to be carried out by unemployed youths and since the majority of the city's population is African they constitute the majority of the assailants. Furthermore there is a near universal conviction amongst Indians that they are the main victims, and there were a number of cases of villagers being robbed in this way whilst I was in the field.

However females can be subjected to another form of threat: the sexual. Because of the large numbers of young females who work in offices and shops it is commonly felt that they are easy prey to male colleagues. This stems in part from the common portrayal by Indians of women as weak sexual creatures who cannot resist male advances.

This was a picture frequently presented to me as a problem for men leaving their wives alone in the house, or of men and women being left alone in situations in the village. In the context of the town, where there is no supervision, where girls are attractively dressed and where the males present are often Africans, who are perceived as being sexually promiscuous as well as being fascinated by Indian women, then the threat becomes immeasurably greater.

Not surprisingly this is an area that abounds in suppositions and contradictions, and whilst I met several male office workers who concurred in this view of the threat to female office workers, I also met many Afro-Guyanese who rejected it. These claimed that Indian girls were often in fact considered unattractive by Africans since they were held to be too skinny and were frequently referred to as looking as if they were 'walking on their hands', a reference to their thin legs.

Nevertheless, with the sexual mores of Georgetown and the large numbers of girls anxious to work in offices there is a near-universal assumption that a good deal of sexual exploitation occurs in such places. Female employees are felt to be always at the mercy of their bosses, and likely to face dismissal if they refuse to comply, with the knowledge that there would be plenty of others willing to take their place if they should go. There is also the assumption that for a girl, especially an Indian, to get a job in a Government office she has to agree to sleep with her boss. This assumption has become so universal in the society that it has even appeared in the press, although it is almost as universally denied by those who are involved. A similar situation is felt to apply in the large sewing factories,

which is one of the main reasons why husbands are so hostile to the idea of their wives working there.

The threat that female urban employment poses for Indian men, both personally and culturally can be considerable, which is why there is so much attention paid to it. But the attractions of this work have taken a firm root in female consciousnesses and there is every indication that it is growing. The wider implications of this for both women and the village as a whole will be examined again later.

BUSINESSES

Although the growth of urban work is the most significant development in this area, it is not the only one, for opportunities have opened up for the self-employed too. Mention has already been made of the way in which the shopkeeping possibilities of the 1950s were not fully maintained, though some have progressed to a more general level of retailing. These have tended to move on the extensions of traditional shopkeeping or to progress beyond it altogether. Thus there are two shopkeepers in the village who have vans which they use for selling in markets and in other areas not well served by shops. One, Shamir, owns the largest shop in the village and has a large new van which has also enabled him to use this for wholesale distribution to other smaller shops along the coast. The other has an older and smaller vehicle and cannot afford the capital to operate on this scale, so he only does a small amount of wholesale trading and tends to concentrate on retail sales from his van.

The largest entrepreneur in the village is also in this business, although he is a special case. Boodhoo is the son of 'old Boodhoo'

who did so well out of the original abandonment of the estate in the early years of the century. He continues to run the family business in Water Street in Georgetown where they are one of the main Indian businesses. Although the family are very much richer than any other businessmen in the village, recently their affairs have deteriorated relatively and the firm was particularly badly hit by the Government's restriction on the importation of over a hundred food items in the early 1970s, since this was their main trade. At the time I left the field they had not decided how to face this challenge and how best to rescue the family fortunes.

Nevertheless they continue to have access to resources well beyond those available to any other villager, such as the original coconut plantation on the East Coast of Demerara which was bought earlier in the century by the father, and the 250 acres of rice land which he also bought and leased out near Windsor Forest, which still makes the family the largest landowner in the village. Boodhoo was also able to use his resources to give himself conveniences not shared by other villagers, such as the only telephone in the village, the biggest house and more comfortable furniture and fittings than anybody else. He was also able to do the kind of things others could only dream about, such as sending a young relative in a car to the ferry early in the morning to reserve a place in the queue, whilst he came along in another car several hours later and boarded the first car to make the crossing, thus saving himself the two-hour wait that drivers had to face for crossings at that time. The second car then returned to the village to be used by his wife or other members of the household. Yet with all these resources he continued to live in Windsor Forest and put up with the inconveniences this entailed rather than move to the

Georgetown suburbs. He professed to feel at home in Windsor Forest, although he took no part in the village affairs and was hardly ever seen apart from when he entered or left his house in his car. He was in fact a very shy man who seemed to welcome the opportunity to retreat from the world and it is likely that unless some of the younger and more dynamic members of the family can take more control the family fortunes will continue to decline.

The next largest entrepreneur is very different and is very much more flamboyant. He is Munir, the elder brother of Shamir the owner of the village's main shop. Munir too started out as a shopkeeper and the original building still exists, a dilapidated wooden structure on Main Street opposite his splendid new house. He made progress by moving out of shopkeeping, and with the aid of his father in law he bought a small filling station on the East Coast of Demerara in the early 1960s. Soon after he sold this for a profit and bought another one just down the coast from Windsor Forest. Finally he was able to establish a much bigger one right by the ferry stelling in Vreed en Hoop and also to get himself appointed the distributor of Esso fuels throughout West Demerara, for which he has his own tanker wagon.

He has a great diversity of other interests, some of them overseas, and every year he co-organises a charter flight to London since this allows him a free seat on the plane and so enables him to see family and friends as well as inspecting his properties in London and Holland. He is very active in Muslim affairs at both the local and national levels, and he organises a great many functions at his house, although these are largely connected with his brother's power struggle for the retention of the meiji-ship of the old mosque. He is also

very involved with the Lions Club and other charitable bodies and travels a great deal, claiming to have visited 23 countries. In many ways he is characterised by the large photo he has displayed in his house of himself in full Highland dress, which he had taken in Edinburgh in 1958 when he was on a British Council Scholarship to study co-operatives at Loughborough College.

Munir is the most successful of the brothers and whilst Shamir the meiji and shopkeeper is also prospering, the next brother, Amir who is also a shopkeeper in the village, is not doing well, much to his wife's disgust. He does not have the drive of his two elder brothers and is a good example of the decline of the purely local shopkeeper. His shop at the very centre of the village had a very dilapidated appearance with almost empty shelves. He sold dry goods (hardwares, clothing and materials) but the range he offered was not good and the prices not competitive with those available in Georgetown. With this sector of the market in decline and not being willing to seek out a new area of activity he had experienced a marked decline in fortunes.

On the other hand the youngest brother, Hakim, is a most interesting example of an entrepreneur. Much against the advice of his brothers he had done what appeared to be a sensible and innovative thing in 1966 and had bought a combine harvester, which had cost him approximately \$35,000. He had no rice land of his own and proposed to specialise in harvesting, working his machines throughout the whole of West Demerara. Since this was the time of the final stages of the move to mechanised cultivation and the introduction of combines was taking place at a rapid rate, he looked certain to sweep the board. At first things went well and having been asked to deposit \$13,000 on

his first combine he was only asked to deposit \$5,000 on the next one, even though it cost \$40,000 in all. This was bought in 1968, and a third was bought in 1970 for \$44,000. This meant he had a layout of \$119,000 and three combines. But things did not go well and the plan was a failure, as everyone, family and villagers alike, said it would be. Thus after I had left the field he was persuaded to sell the combines, rescued from his debts by his brothers and packed off to Canada under a cloud to have another attempt at making his fortune.

All the rice farmers to whom I spoke predicted that the venture would fail and apparently their projections of the reasons for this coincided not only with those of his brothers, but also with what actually happened. Combines are complex and delicate machines which can be easily damaged by rough and careless driving, so that private owners invariably drive them themselves or entrust the machine to an older son who can be relied upon. Hakim's mistake was to rely on hired labour, who although hand picked, well paid and employed for a long time, could not be sufficiently relied upon to make the enterprise work. This experience also reveals a good deal about the attitudes of Guyanese employees to their employers, and finds a reflection in the practices of office workers and officials in Georgetown.

The central problem was that the employees did not feel sufficiently committed to the enterprise and Hakim, with the result that careless driving resulted in damage to the machines and frequent breakdowns. This in turn not only cost Hakim a good deal of money in spare parts and lost production but also deterred farmers from using his combines, since they were not felt to be reliable. As was

discussed in Chapter 4, at the time of harvest speed is of the essence, and farmers delayed by combines quickly change their allegiance.

In addition he faced the problem of straight corruption. If a privately owned machine is working in the backdam and breaks down the owner has to hasten to town to obtain the replacement parts, since to carry a sufficiently comprehensive range of spares is beyond the resources of any private owner. Even from the relatively close backlands of the West Coast this means a walk of at least five miles to the main road, taking a taxi to the ferry, crossing to the city and reaching the stockists before they close at 4pm. In practical terms this means a whole day's production lost, with the consequences for the farmer mentioned above.

But if there is a machine operated by a hired driver working nearby, whether it belongs to the Guyana Rice Corporation or a businessman like Hakim, the problem can be reduced. For since almost all combines in the country are of the same make it would be easy to cannibalise a part from one machine for another, if the driver can be persuaded to do so. A driver working his own machine or that of his father would never do this, but a hired driver might. For he will be paid whether the machine is broken or not and as an employee he has no interest in his employer's problems. Furthermore he receives perhaps the equivalent of a whole day's pay as a bribe whilst the private owner makes more than that by keeping to his schedule. Thus everyone is happy except Hakim, and apparently he suffered a good deal from this kind of problem, as well as the related one of farmers who bribed the driver to pretend he had cut less bags than he had, which reduced the cutting fee. Although he bought himself an old Landrover to keep

track of his machines, the distances involved usually made close supervision impossible. These kinds of problems greatly affect the Guyana Rice Corporation's machines and largely contribute to their appalling record of inefficiency.

The rate of breakdowns that his machines experienced made them unreliable and so local farmers preferred to use the privately owned machines from the village. This meant that Hakim was forced to operate further afield in areas where there were fewer local machines and farmers were glad to take any that were available. But this in turn spread his resources even more thinly, which increased his logistical problems and reduced the closeness of his supervision. Thus a vicious circle was set up which led to his abandoning the venture. This shows that the scope for entrepreneurial innovation, even in the seemingly predictable area of mechanised cultivation, is by no means reliable.

The experience of Hakim and the prognostications of doom offered by farmers have a strangely familiar ring to them, for they are very similar to those offered to Huggins during his investigation in 1938. Then they were advanced as reasons why a farm enterprise should not be expanded beyond a certain size and they clearly came as something of a surprise to him (1941:30; see also Chapter 3 above). Although he offers no explanation for the villagers' views, I think it is extremely likely that what they had in mind were the problems associated with larger-scale enterprises, which essentially meant capital and labour. These views seem to indicate a clear and consistent set of values: family are to be trusted, but outsiders are not. As has been mentioned above this attitude finds a further

reflection in the behaviour of employees, in that everyone had manifold examples of the 'insolence of office' exhibited by civil servants. On the other hand there were also many stories of villagers and others who had exploited the trust of employers and ended up losing very advantageous positions because of this, whereas the counterpart of this is the fierce standards demanded by the management of the Georgetown sewing factories and the like. In many ways the distrust of employees parallels the myth of the sexual weakness of women, in that the expectations of both actors and observers about what 'others' do in such situations are such that these expectations become self-fulfilling prophecies.

In 1956 Smith found taxis (or hire cars as they are more commonly called) to be a favoured form of investment, and there are still 6 of them in the village. However these are heavily outnumbered by the 22 private cars, many of which can be hired unofficially for functions or emergencies. The hire cars themselves ply on the public road and whilst in many ways it is a glamorous activity it has considerable drawbacks. Cars are very expensive to purchase and the costs of insurance, licencing and repairs are also considerable. Furthermore, since the hire car drivers tend to project a flamboyant image through their driving style, the result is that accidents and damage are fairly common, adding further to the costs of operation. The hire cars in the village all worked along the West Coast from Vreed en Hoop and a lot of their business was taking regular sets of passengers for the morning ferries and collecting them at night. The normal practice with all but the city-centre taxis was to take passengers on an individual basis until the car was full, as in the rush-hours they always were. During the rest of the day they hung around the ferry

stalling waiting for casual trade. All the hire car men in the village felt unhappy about the trade, since they were sure the Government was against them, especially in view of the plans to close the railway and replace it with a Government-run bus service along the newly upgraded coast road.

With the growth of road transport and hire cars in particular the village had developed businesses to support this, and now has two vehicle repair shops. They are relatively simple arrangements under sheds next to their owners' houses on Main Street and concentrate on dealing with hire cars. It is significant that on the whole they do not do tractor repairs, since most owners prefer to do their own to save money, or to do what they feel is a reliable job. Alternatively they might bring in a friend with more expertise. Information about the repair of tractors, especially the esoteric complexities of the hydraulic system, is considered public knowledge and other owners freely give their advice and opinions, whereas the same does not apply to cars.

There was also a successful welding shop in the village run by a man who had worked on a sugar estate for many years and had learned his trade there. He repairs cars and agricultural equipment, but most of his trade is connected with contracts to make metal structures for other businesses, such as the cage wheels for tractors and parts for the cane trailers used by cane farmers. He is thus not economically dependent on the village, feeling no loyalties to it, simply residing there, keeping himself to himself and taking no part in village affairs. It is interesting to note that a successful businessman is able to do this without being constrained to participate in the

community's political and status systems. This is a rather different situation to that of the creole-oriented 'élite' group mentioned by Smith for 1956 (R.T.Smith & Jayawardena 1959:330), and indicates the wider stage on which people from the village can now operate, as will be discussed later.

There are also several men who have businesses out of the village, such as the man who has a lumber-delivery business with a truck. There are a number of contractors, only one of whom regularly employs a number of men, usually on building houses. The remainder are basically carpenters, since most buildings are made of wood, and these men vacillate between being sub-contractors and being employees.

There are however, three people who have dry goods stalls in the covered part of Stabroek market, the main covered city market next to the produce market. These stalls are reputedly very profitable and are eagerly sought after, changing hands for high prices. There are also two men who have tailoring businesses in Georgetown, but these are only places to work since both are one-man businesses. Finally there is an umbrella repairer and a man who has a barber's shop in the centre of town.

There have also been other economic opportunities based on the village but oriented to the wider society. Of these perhaps the most unexpected is the case of the chickens. Some 54% of Indian households in the village had several fowl, usually to provide eggs and ultimately meat for the family diet. This is shown in Table 6/6, where we can see that of those households with fowl, 52% had 10 birds or less. There are also some who breed fowl for sale locally or who

produce eggs for local sale, and they tend to have up to 30 fowl or so. However, as Table 6/6 shows there are some households with considerably more, including 11 with more than a hundred fowl, and one with 325.

TABLE 6/6
OWNERSHIP OF FOWL

Fowl	Owners	Total Fowl	%
1-5	22	67	1.4
6-10	115	801	17.0
11-15	56	691	14.6
16-20	21	398	8.4
21-25	10	240	5.1
26-30	9	83	1.8
31-35	3	103	2.2
36-40	7	265	5.6
41-45	1	44	0.9
46-50	4	200	4.2
51-100	5	456	9.7
101-200	3	520	11.0
201-300	3	850	18.0
TOTAL	259	4718	100.0

Unlike the free range hens of the common domestic form the birds owned by those with large numbers are held in batteries and are fed a special processed feed. They are grown as a business venture, either for their eggs or for their meat and the owners choose to specialise in one or the other. The products of the enterprise are mainly sold in Georgetown, either to middlemen who distribute them to shops or directly to the shops themselves. The capital cost of these enterprises is high, covering the batteries, birds and feed, but the rewards can also be good for those able to undertake it.

Another form of local enterprise to which reference has already been made is that of garment manufacture. As was mentioned before there have long been seamstresses and tailors in the village to cater to the needs of the adults, and 71% of households have sewing machines to cater for childrens' clothes. The new development is the production of clothes for sale out of the village. These are mainly for children and babies, with the most successful manufacturers catering for the large stores in Georgetown. Of the six manufacturers in the village, three are in this top category, although one is really a lone worker. The other two each employ 3 or 4 girls to sew and produce embroidered childrens' wear to order. One is run by a man who is very keen to export, having already supplied some items to Antigua. He has also devised a way of randomly dying his yarn to give a distinctive appearance to his work.

The others are women who work alone and sew more mundane clothes for sale in local markets. All are women who sewed for their families and decided to branch out by making some shorts or underwear for children and taking them along to a market. One of them now has a regular weekly stall at a market in one of the large estate communities along the coast. A variant of this activity that is showing signs of popularity is the making of zippered snopping bags which are also used by commuting workers to carry their lunch. These are made from heavy plastic and several people in the village had started to make them, but at the time none had yet purchased the special sewing machine that this kind of work really requires.

Apart from sewing, another traditional occupation in the village is goldsmithing. Indians are renowned for a love of gold and one of the

great myths of Guyanese society is that all spare money acquired by them is spent on gold jewellery for their wives. Needless to say they are also supposed to have a great deal of it. Whilst there is little truth in this, it is nevertheless true that almost all Indian women have some gold jewellery, though certainly not the very elaborate tillaries of popular legend. Usually it consists of earrings and bangles with an occasional brooch for best wear. Furthermore it is almost always of low carat, usually 9.

There are two goldsmiths in the village who do work to commission as well as making speculative items for sale in the sugar estate markets, where there is presumably more of a demand for this kind of work than in the local villages. They also spend a certain amount of time repairing and re-making jewelery as well as 'shining it up'. For since the gold nuggets they buy from the larger dealers in Georgetown are then melted with copper to reduce the carat, the finished product is dipped in an acid bath to remove the impurities and let the purer gold show on the surface. However after a time this wears away and the item then looks tarnished and discoloured. It can be brought back to life with another dipping in chemicals and polishing by the goldsmith.

Gold continues to be found in the interior of the country, although in lesser amounts than in the past and the trade is firmly dominated by the large Georgetown jewellers, from whom the village goldsmiths buy their raw gold. There is a continuing demand for this work, but the prices of new items continue to rise and so the re-cycling of existing ones is more common. Thus the scope for entrepreneurial development by goldsmiths is not great.

Another traditional occupation is that of fisherman and in the village there are 8 of these, who in turn employ a further 12 men in the business. In addition there are another 8 wives who are involved in the selling of the fish, giving approximately 28-30 people regularly involved in this trade in the village. To this has to be added the much larger and varying number of people who are occasionally engaged in some form of fishing. Fish abound in Guyanese waters and are not hard to catch, which is why they feature so much in people's diets.

Private individuals can catch them in the trenches, in the rice fields or better still in the conservancy and its canals to the rear of the cultivation. This is a popular trip for young boys especially. These fish can be caught by rod and line or more commonly by casting nets. There are a number of men in the village for whom fishing is a favoured pastime, usually in the backdam, where the possession of a small boat is a great advantage. Alternatively it is possible to fish for shrimps in the trenches near the sea wall using a fine meshed net on a circular wooden frame, with old mosquito netting being ideal. There was a husband and wife who lived near me and who could regularly be seen fishing in this way in the main trench in front of their house, and on several occasions I came across them doing so in the dark having come rather late from a trip to Georgetown and needing something to liven up their evening meal.

There were even more fish to be obtained from the sea and it was perfectly possible to stand on the sea wall at high tide and catch fish with a net or line without leaving dry land. However the professional fishermen do go out to sea and fish for several different

types of catch. The smaller boats use a 'purse seine' or 'Chinese seine' to catch shrimps and small fish ('skinfish'). This entails going out 1-2 miles, where the water is still fairly shallow, and trawling the net against the ebbing tide. Alternatively this type of boat can be used to trail a long line of baited hooks to catch larger and more valuable fish. The largest type of boat used is the one needed for the 'pin seine' method, where one end of a long straight net is fixed near the shore and the rest played out in a long curve out to sea and back again to the shore. As the tide recedes the fish are caught in the net and taken into the boat. This method can only be used in shallow coastal waters, but large amounts of fish can be caught with it. The boat can then await the next high tide (6 hours away) or take the fish ashore over the mud on a plank for sale nearby if close to a populous area.

The village fishermen, like most others, fished along a large section of the coast, moving with the effects of tides on banks and fishing grounds. They thus had a number of options for disposing of their catch, depending on their location or success. Firstly they could dispose of it immediately if they could land it at a village at market time. Alternatively they could sell it to hucksters who would in turn sell it in a market, or alternatively from door to door. If such immediate disposal was not possible the catch could be stored in boxes packed with ice on the Windsor Forest foreshore and then sold later that day or the next one. Finally if the time was right a good catch could be taken directly to Georgetown to be sold in the fishmarket there, though here there was more competition from big boats which regularly catered for this market. All these local boats now had outboard motors, and some fishermen had more than one.

However fishing was generally considered an arduous and low status occupation with little entrepreneurial potential.

LOCAL EMPLOYEES

The same kinds of problems face those who are local employees. Excluding those employed by their families, locally employed males represent only 28% of all male employees. Considering that this is what was traditionally the main employment category for Indian rice farmers, this figure shows again the extent of the move from the traditional pattern of occasional work to that of full-time employment out of the village.

As has been mentioned already, now only 53.6% of Indian families plant rice, which means that the remaining 46.4% or 219 families have to find an income from alternative sources (excluding those who do not need to do so, such as the retired, or are not able to do so, such as the chronically sick). The most obvious solution is to seek work locally, but as we have seen most men have been forced to go to Georgetown to find the work they seek. Nevertheless there are 108 men who do work locally and there are 63 households headed by local labourers (15% of all male-headed households). Furthermore these represent 73% of all male employees who work in Windsor Forest (which also includes a number of teachers). Thus for those who work locally this essentially means labouring.

Traditionally Indian rice farmers have worked casually when not busy with their farms, but as has been shown already (Chapter 5) it is now possible with mechanised cultivation techniques to plant rice and still have a full time job out of the village. As far as the local

labourers are concerned only 37 of the 102 (36%) have rice land, a lower proportion than for the village as a whole, and even within this group the acreages they plant are below the average for the village. Thus their income from rice will be low.

The 65 families without rice land have a limited range of jobs available with which to support themselves. One of the most common is that of porter at a rice factory, helping to handle the padi being dried and milled. However this is a seasonal job, since there is no work during the wet season when no milling can take place. Alternatively they are sometimes hired by more prosperous farmers to assist with land preparation, especially if the farmer is old or a woman without family nearby. Similarly they can occasionally get work sewing seed, weeding, spraying and other cultivation activities. Then there are occasional jobs on the sites of houses being constructed or modified. It was a great benefit to these workers that during the fieldwork the Government was re-building the sea wall near the village and the Guyana Rice Corporation was building a padi storage silo next to the village, both of which provided welcome sources of income, but with their completion the prospect of similar projects looks very dim.

Those men who described themselves as full-time local labourers were distributed fairly evenly between their thirties and their fifties, as Table 6/7 shows. On the other hand the part-time local labourers were younger, with 23% of them less than twenty years of age. This contrast is also found in the marital status of the two groups, for here we find that only 17% of full-time local labourers are single, compared with 37% of the part-time ones. This pattern is further reflected in the fact that part-time local labourers represent

7% of all economically active males, but only 4% of heads of households. On the other hand full-time local labourers represent 9.8% of economically active males and 10.8% of heads of households.

TABLE 6/7
AGES OF LOCAL MALE EMPLOYEES

Age	Part-Time Labourers		Full-Time Labourers		Fishermen		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
10-19	10	23.2	5	8.5	-	-	15	13.9
20-29	11	25.6	20	33.9	3	50.0	34	31.5
30-39	8	18.6	14	23.7	2	33.3	24	22.2
40-49	9	20.9	15	25.4	1	16.7	25	23.1
50-59	3	7.0	5	8.5	-	-	8	7.4
60-69	2	4.7	-	-	-	-	2	1.9
TOTAL	43	39.8	59	54.6	6	5.6	108	100.0

We thus have a situation where part-time local labourers are largely young men, often single, who are not heads of households. These young men do not own any rice land and spend their time assisting their fathers with the family rice land if they have any, doing occasional pieces of work when they can and trying to obtain a more secure and regular job.

On the other hand the full-time local labourers are older, predominantly married and more likely to own rice land. But even so more than 60% of them are landless. As one would expect, the pattern

of ownership is related to age, so that the younger workers do not own land, with only 20% (4 out of 20) in their twenties doing so. On the other hand land ownership is more common with older labourers, and amongst those in their fifties 80% have rice land (4 out of 5).

Nevertheless the economic fortunes of the local labourers are not good, as can be judged from their ownership of the kinds of durable goods that indicate basic standards of living. Whilst 74% of all male-headed households in the village have electricity, in the case of households headed by local labourers the proportion is 49%, the lowest level for any male household heads. The full-time local labourers are also below the village average for the other basic item of piped water (78% compared to 88%). They also have a lower rate of ownership of other common items such as kerosene stoves, radios, sewing machines and a rainwater storage system.

LOCAL FEMALE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

The same kind of pattern can be seen in the case of female-headed households, for they too are deficient in certain durable items commonly found in the village. With the exception of piped water they consistently have a lower level of ownership of such items as electricity, sewing machines and radios, although not usually as low as that recorded for the local labourers. These female-headed households represent about 12% of all Indian households (56 of 472) and they are either headed by widows (79%) or by divorced or separated women. There are no households headed by single Indian women.

Of the female household heads 43% are sixty or over and not much involved in work. However a majority have to earn a living and only

32% of them did not register some form of economic activity. Mention has already been made of the way in which widows and separated women feature in the sale of provisions and greens in Georgetown, where they represented nearly a quarter of those involved. These single women similarly feature in local employment for although widows, separated and divorced women represent only 13% of the adult female population (15+), they nevertheless represent 29% of all local female employees and 31% of part-time local female labour. This work tends to cover the planting of rice for those who still use the transplanting system, weeding and cutting by hand when this is available. Thus we can see that widowed, separated and divorced women are under some economic pressure to sustain themselves, especially the 53% of them who are heads of households.

However they are not the only women who are driven to work by economic necessity. There are 31 local female employees, of whom 67% are in current unions. Most of these women (67%) are in their thirties and forties and almost all (84%) engage in part time work, usually of the agricultural kind mentioned above.

Labouring activity has a number of disadvantages for women. If it is related to a crop it will be infrequent and dependent on the needs of certain stages of the cultivation. Even so there are some heavy tasks that are considered beyond women, which restricts further what they can do. Furthermore such work is becoming less frequent with the increased level of mechanisation, though there remain some fields in which machine cultivation is not possible. More recently there has developed the attitude that it is somewhat demeaning for a woman to work in the fields and it tends to be seen as a sign of economic

desperation, especially for younger married women. To an extent this is reinforced by the fact that for women who do not want to or cannot engage in the external economic system there are a number of alternatives available locally.

The most traditional form of female economic activity is to grow vegetables for sale in the local market. It is possible for women to grow a variety of produce, such as greens, bagi, calalou and okra in their yard at the back of the house lot, for even those with only a half-lot have sufficient ground to do so. However not all lots are well drained and one tractor owner used to make a very reasonable extra income out of carrying loads of earth from the rice fields to owners' yards where these were too low for successful gardening. However even so it is likely that not more than half of the households grow greens in this way, though some, like a neighbour of mine, have almost a market garden in their yard.

Alternatively it is possible to grow greens and the root crops termed 'provisions', such as aubergine, casava on the 'dam head' or raised bank between the rice fields. This is a time-honoured place to grow vegetables, but its use has changed with time and in the recent past its popularity has declined. In the days when women went regularly to the backdam to help with the rice they were easily able to attend to the vegetables too, but with the decline in female involvement in rice their ability to oversee the vegetables in the back is reduced. It would be possible for the husband to take over this task and several do, but others consider that this activity belongs to women and do not wish to become involved.

There is also the problem of distance and isolation, for it is not uncommon for rice fields to be four or five miles from the owner's house. This leads to the problem of security and the threat that crops could be damaged or, more likely, stolen. Many farmers claimed that there had been a substantial growth in what was commonly called 'praedial larceny' and laid the responsibility at the door of the unemployed youths. It is however very difficult to assess the extent of the problem and the effect it might have had on vegetable cultivation. If the latter has been less of late it could be because of mechanised cultivation and urban work, since these mean that fewer people are in the fields at any one time and thus able to keep an eye on their own and their neighbour's cultivation.

Nevertheless there are 49 women who regularly sell vegetables in the village market (34% of all women working on their own account). As one would expect 90% of them are married, with the remainder separated or divorced. Furthermore they are spread evenly between their thirties, forties and fifties, indicating that they are mature married women supplementing their income with local economic activity.

For those who wish to spend more time at this or who have the land to contemplate cultivation on a major scale it is possible to grow vegetables for sale in other villages. This produce is usually 'given' (sold) to hucksters who travel along the coast regularly, buying greens and provisions in villages in order to be able to sell them in the larger markets, especially on the sugar estates. A variant of this production is that of eggs mentioned before. Several of the hucksters specialise in the sale of eggs in the neighbouring markets, as do three women in Windsor Forest.

Thus for women in the village who do not wish to become involved in the external economic system, the local economic opportunities continue to revolve round the traditional female activities of vegetable cultivation and sewing. However, as we have seen, even here there have been changes since the 1950s, with women selling substantial amounts of vegetables and in several cases moving into the newer businesses of fowl and eggs. On the other hand the arrival of the electric sewing machine and cheap synthetic fabrics have given a new spurt to sewing, either as a seamstress for consumption locally, or as a garment manufacturer for sale elsewhere.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Although many of these changes are significant for the daily lives of the inhabitants of the village, if we look at the wider level of the village's relation to the outside world of the rest of the country and, ultimately, to the metropolitan countries, we see that there have been some major structural changes that will have significant long term consequences for the village. Now 41% of the adult male labour force (15-59 years) have regular jobs out of the community, with three-quarters of them working in Georgetown. In 1956 Smith saw Windsor Forest heading for an impasse:

"For the past few years prosperity has been increasing for Windsor Forest rice farmers. Rising prices for rice, coupled with an increase in the area under cultivation, particularly on private estates lower down the coast, has enabled incomes to keep up with, and slightly overtake, a rising cost-of-living and a rapidly increasing population. The outlook for the future is not so encouraging. It does not appear that the upward trend in prices is likely to continue at its past rate, and there is no indication of a rapid expansion, either in the area of land under cultivation or in any other sector of the economy. Even if it were possible to bring about significant increases in yields per acre, it is clear that a large proportion of the next generation of adults will either have to turn to some crop which gives a higher

return from a smaller area of land, or leave the district, or endure a sharp drop in the present standard of living. From the figures given in this paper one can see that such a drop must result in real hardship."

(R.T.Smith 1957, p. 519)

This grim forecast of Windsor Forest undergoing the 'agricultural involution' that Geertz describes for Java (1968) was made on the basis of the traditional and labour-intensive system of production. If the labour displacement of mechanisation had been added it would have looked like an inevitable formula for disaster. However this did not happen, and the crisis was avoided by the advent of urban work, which Smith had not foreseen as a possibility, certainly not on the scale to which it developed.

The impetus for this movement began with the creation of the RMB jobs, with the start of political autonomy and in particular with the arrival of Indian political consciousness in the 1950s. As we have seen the development of the urban employment pattern was fostered by political patronage, and continues to be so, with the PNC Government anxious to woo the support of Indian communities such as Windsor Forest.

In this Chapter we have seen what emerged from the villagers' attempts to cope with the new situation in which the village found itself as a result of the move to fully mechanised rice cultivation. The effects of the original move to mechanisation were not foreseen by the villagers and it is likely that they were not foreseen by the officials who implemented the assistance given to farmers. Similarly the move to urban employment was not planned, simply developing out of the attempts of villagers to make ends meet. Thus here again we have

an example of dependent decision making as the villagers struggle to cope with a set of circumstances that are not of their making and over which they have virtually no control.

The significance of the resulting 'survival strategy' that was developed is that it had implications for the national system of ethnic economic specialisation (Despres 1975). Thus with the urban employment market traditionally being seen as an African preserve the intervention of the Indians was likely to be seen as a threat to this economic base, especially in the light of the relatively stagnant state of the Guyanese economy. This is precisely the situation in which Cross sees the characteristic of 'ethnic salience' coming to the fore (1978). Thus one would expect the African section to defend themselves from the Indian threat by means of the resources to hand. In part this has happened, with the discrimination about which Indians complain so frequently. At the same time there are the more powerful resources of central Government, which are held to be under the control of the 'African' party, the PNC. However, the situation is not as simple as that, in that the Government does not have a totally free hand, being constrained by the problem of Indian disaffection, political ethnicity and the possibility of further communal violence similar to that of the 1960s. This will be discussed in the next Chapter.

In the meantime the villagers of Windsor Forest have become adjusted to the idea of regular urban work, and some relish the thought. Mention has been made of the extent to which females have responded to the opportunities now offered by office work in particular. Although the numbers involved are relatively small their

symbolic impact is nevertheless considerable, as the flourishing commercial school demonstrates. Associated with this are a number of ideas about the new role of women in the economy and the society, both locally and nationally.

It is too early to say just how permanent a change these new attitudes will have, but already there are signs. The most striking is the decline in fertility discussed in Chapter 4, along with the participation of girls in formal education, as well as the more immediately visible phenomena such as dress. With the indications that female involvement in urban employment is likely to continue and probably expand, the significance of these new attitudes in the long run could be considerable. Thus the relationship of the community to the urban creole power centre is being modified on a range of different levels, and it is to a further discussion of this that I now turn.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE LOCAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

- Introduction.
- Early Administration.
- The Settlers' Committee.
- National Political Developments.
- The Disturbances and Windsor Forest.
- The PNC Governments.
- The Move to a Local Authority.
- The Rate Payers' Association.
- The Community Development Committee.
- The Changing Relationship with Government.
- Other Organisations.
- The Hechter Model.
- Summary and Conclusions.

INTRODUCTION

Windsor Forest as an Indian rice farming community is very much the creation of central Government, with the village being dependent on support from this source ever since. Yet, in recent years the relationship between the village and Government has altered radically. As the historical account given in Chapters 2 and 3 makes clear, the settlers successfully resisted the creation of a Local Authority in the area for a very long time, preferring the direct relationship with Government that they had traditionally enjoyed. Now that has gone, with the withdrawal of Government administration from the village and the creation of a Local Authority in its place.

At the same time national political events have impinged on the community. Although the village largely avoided the worst kinds of communal violence in the 1960s, the effects of 'the disturbances' were nevertheless apparent. Similarly, although Windsor Forest did not, until 1973, have any formal involvement at the national political level, it did represent a distinctive pocket of Indian ethnic identity, with the political extensions of that identity that were available. It was therefore a suitable focus for the centralising activities of the ruling Peoples' National Congress (PNC), in their efforts to consolidate their control over the country following formal independence.

Mention was made in Chapter 1 of the 'Hechter model' of ethnic politics and how this could be translated into the circumstances of Guyana. The experience of Windsor Forest provides one set of data which tend to support the predictions of the model, whilst national ethnic and political developments provide a complementary aspect that

is also confirmatory. During the time of the fieldwork the village was alive with political debate, mostly centering on the activities of the new Local Authority, but in the background, never far away, there always loomed the power, policies and demands of Government. Thus, even though the debate started out on a topic such as the imposition of rates in the housing areas of the Local Authority, it frequently swung on to the problems of rice farmers, the need for a Health Centre, the problems of corruption in the Civil Service or the way in which the Government was abusing the democratic rights of the citizens. This spectrum of topics clearly illustrated the extent to which Government dominated so many aspects of the village's existence. It is this relationship that the present Chapter seeks to examine.

EARLY ADMINISTRATION

After being taken over by Government the Government Estates in West Demerara, Windsor Forest, La Jalousie and Hague, were administered by the Department of Lands & Mines, although from the earliest times it was envisaged that they would eventually come under the Local Government Board as a Country District (Minute of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines, Combined Court No. 600, 1911, at para 13, CO 114/137). However with the continuing tussles over whether the estates should be sold, which occurred in 1917 and 1923, the question of the more long term administration of the estates was shelved. Nevertheless the following motion was put to the Combined Court on 20th January 1927:

"Whereas the communities of Windsor Forest, La Jalousie and Hague on the West Coast of the County of Demerara are for some purposes presently administered by the Commissioner of Lands & Mines, and for other purposes by the Director of Public Works
And whereas Pln. Windsor Forest has suffered serious loss from floods despite the erection of a pumping plant and the conditions and surroundings of the said community have been the subject of repeated complaint

Be it resolved - That this Court respectfully requests His Excellency the Governor to consider the advisability of introducing into the Court of Policy a Bill to provide for the administration of Plns. Windsor Forest, La Jalousie and Hague by a Board, or by such other means as His Excellency may consider advisable."

(Minutes of the Combined Court, 20th January 1927, p. 56, CO 114/196)

Changes were afoot, as was indicated by the last sentence of the motion. For from 21st December 1931 the whole of West Demerara was to have become part of a new Administrative District under the District Government Ordinance. This meant that the Government Estates were to fall under the control of the newly created District Commissioner in Vreed en Hoop (Report of the District Commissioner for West Demerara, 1933, p. 4, CO 114/216). It was hoped that later the estates would become Country Districts with their own councils (Report of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines, 1944, para 21, CO 114/235). All these changes resulted from the Committee on Local Government, which had reported in 1931 (Legislative Council Paper No. 7, 1931).

However these changes were very unpopular in the villages, especially since they coincided with a proposal to increase the rates for houselots from \$2.25 to \$8 per acre (an increase of 355%). This "met with some opposition as a result of political agitation" (Report of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines for 1944, para 21, CO 114/235). As a result the old rate was collected by the Department but "as this amount was grossly insufficient for the necessary works to be done the areas remained, for the most part, in bad condition" (ibid). As we shall see, this is a problem that dogged the village for the next thirty years.

The other familiar theme of the reports of the time is that:

"The residents strongly opposed the formation of these villages into Country Districts and the Order remained in abeyance pending the decision of the Governor, to whom the residents appealed."

(Report of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines for 1944, para 21, CO 114/235)

The technique of appealing to the highest authority is one that had been used by the residents to good effect in the early years of the estates, when mass picketing of the Immigration Agent General had taken place. This had succeeded in convincing the Administration of the strength of the residents' feeling in favour of the estates remaining under Government control rather than being sold into private ownership. It was a technique that was also used on a number of other occasions in later years.

Nevertheless it seems that the West Coast villagers were not the only ones to express resistance, for as Young says:

"District Commissioners and their establishments were set up in 1932, but the new system of Councils recommended by the 1931 Committee and accepted by the Government has never come into effect, in spite of Sir Edward Denham's assurance that it would."

(Young 1958, p. 132)

Thus the villages remained under the control of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines, with a special Advisory Committee consisting of three members from each estate to "advise on the expenditure on the house lot areas and any other matter relating to these villages" (Report of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines, 1945, p. 11, CO 114/235). This seemed to work well, but by next year it had to be reported that:

"The houselot area of Windsor Forest was not well maintained, the rates not being sufficient to cover the cost of keeping it, particularly the drains, in good condition. It is proposed to increase the rates for 1947."

(Report of the Commissioner of Lands & Mines, 1946, para 20, CO 114/240)

We thus see here two themes that have been present in Windsor Forest's dealings with the outside world since the foundation of the Government Estates, and which continue to play a role in the 1970s. On the one hand there is the perception of a special relationship with central Government which essentially stems from the origins of the Estates and the leasehold system in particular. This relationship can be defended when necessary by appeals to the highest authority, and on most such occasions has been enormously successful. On the other hand there is the idea that the village should be autonomous as far as the paying of rates for the housing area is concerned, and that these should be kept to a minimum.

The two are linked together in that the farmers felt from the earliest times, as they did in 1972, that the leasing of rice land should not entail further assessment to fund the rates for the housing areas. On the other hand if the assessment for the housing areas alone are to raise the funds for their upkeep rather than being shared with the rice lands, then the rates would have to be very high, and this is precisely what the villagers were objecting to in 1944. However a sudden rise of more than 300% from \$2.25 to \$8 per acre seems an amazingly insensitive proposal.

THE SETTLERS' COMMITTEE

This financial autonomy meant, in fact, financial parsimony and the residents seem to have been satisfied with fairly minimal standards. This approach is reflected in the Report of the Settlers' Committee (which took over responsibility from the Advisory Committee in 1962). With the final demise of this internal Committee in 1970 it produced a Report for the period 1968-70 which also set out the history of its

activities. It was bound with a special cover which had on the front of it a photograph of members of the Settlers' Committee meeting with the President of the Republic of Guyana to discuss the proposal to assess the rice lands to raise funds for the proposed Local Authority - another example of the tradition of going to the top!

The Report details the way in which the Committee sought to maintain the village's system of bridges, drains and streets on a levy from each house. This was originally \$1.32 per house, though it was later raised to \$2.48 and finally \$5. This last figure raised, in 1965, some \$765 to maintain Windsor Forest and La Jalousie. Although official figures for this period are not available for Windsor Forest alone the figures for 1961, the latest published ones available, show that the West Demerara Esatates as a whole consumed \$38,000 in that year. Whilst this figure also covers the money spent on the upkeep of the cultivation areas as well, it does nevertheless make the Settlers' Committee's \$765 appear minimal indeed.

In 1961 things took a decisive turn when much of what the residents had resisted came to pass. As the Report of the then administering agency states:

"During the year under review it was decided that the Land Development Division should relinquish administrative control of the Scheme at the end of the year. With effect from January 1962, the Drainage and Irrigation Department will assume control of the drainage and irrigation works. The Local Government Department is pursuing the question of the formation of a local authority which should assume administrative responsibility for the area. The Land Development Division will however continue the collection of revenue until the administrative machinery for the area is worked out."

(Report of the Minsitry of National Resources (Land Development) for the year 1961, at para 44)

Although the administrative control of the cultivation areas was maintained by the Drainage and Irrigation Board and the financial arrangements for the payment of leases continued, a means of producing satisfactory arrangements for the administration of the housing areas continued to elude the administrators. For the time being the Settlers' Committee, till then an advisory body, continued and took on the executive role and in 1964 when all Government administration was removed from the housing areas they were quite alone, since no plans for a Local Authority had been finalised by then. Thus their status as the body administering the villages of Windsor Forest and La Jalousie was officially interim, but this is not how they saw it. They saw themselves as the true successors to the administration provided by the Department of Lands & Mines, and latterly the Land Settlement Department. They estimated that there remained approximately \$174.72 from the rates collected by the departing administration, and they sought to obtain it.

Government refused and the Crown Solicitor ruled that the money could only be paid to a Local Authority, which did not exist. The Committee considered suing the Government, but decided against this, and as their Report states:

"The Committee took over the responsibility of the residential areas of Windsor Forest and La Jalousie without a single cent to start with. It was a period of test and trial for the members."

(Report of the Windsor Forest & La Jalousie Settlers' Committee, 1968-70, p. 10)

The Committee successfully shouldered this burden and managed not only to raise taxes but also to obtain a loan of \$800 from the Chase Manhattan Bank, which it even managed to repay within the agreed time. This enabled it to re-metal some of the streets with 'burnt earth',

the traditional method of preparing a road on the coastland, which entails 'burning a heap' of clay with wooden logs to produce a cinder-like substance that can be packed into holes in the road. Unfortunately its effects are short-lived (Smith 1962:74). In addition the Committee were able to organise the erection of three bridges in the village to enable streets to be brought across the middle-walk trench and connect them with the main street on the other side. Since the main street ran from the public road to the railway station at the back of the village it was the responsibility of central Government and tended to be kept in better condition than the other streets.

Thus by the time the Settlers' Committee went out of existence in 1970 with the final advent of a Local Authority they not only had a lengthy history dating back to 1945, but also a proud record of achievement during 1965-70 when they had been solely responsible for the housing areas. This was clearly reflected in their Report, which was distributed widely in the area, and which formed the basis for an attack on the new Local Authority and a challenge to its powers, as we shall see.

Their approach was minimalist and consisted essentially of responding to problems as they arose. They did not have a developmental view and no developmental programme of their own, though they were prepared to put plans to Government for them to implement, as we shall see. This meant that Windsor Forest had none of the public amenities that were becoming more common elsewhere, such as metalled roads, a community centre and street lights. Mostly these kinds of things were to be found in the sugar estates, where they were

part of the facilities provided by the companies, but increasingly they were also to be found in Local Authority areas as a result of development projects.

These were things about which the residents of Windsor Forest were well aware and for the most part desired to have. The question was who was to provide them? The Settlers' Committee believed strongly that it was the responsibility of Government to do so, whereas Government believed that at least part of the cost of such projects should be raised locally by a Local Authority. Thus when a Local Authority was finally imposed on the area by central Government, it was charged with a more positive developmental role than its predecessor. However this contrast in philosophy concerning the role of the Local Authority was compounded by a contrast in party political allegiance too. In the context of Guyana this also tends to mean racial identity and has a complex of other associations derived from the country's recent political history as well. Thus events at the local level were to a large extent overtaken and determined by national political developments.

NATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The most significant political development of the 1950s was the move towards internal self-government by the colony and the establishment of elections to the National Assembly based on universal adult suffrage for the first time in 1953. This development, and the process leading up to it, represented the political awakening of the Indian population who formed, if not a majority of the electorate, at least the largest section of it (Smith 1962; Glasgow 1970; Simms 1966; Jagan 1966; Reno 1964). The Peoples' Progressive Party (PPP) led

by Dr. Cheddi Jagan swept to power and started another development that had great long-term significance for the Guyanese political system.

Jagan had always made clear his commitment to a multi-racial socialism and with the advent of his administration he set about the implementation of the kind of programme this entailed. In comparison with regimes that have emerged in the Third World since that time the Jagan government would appear mild and co-operative enough, being willing to work within the framework provided by the colonial power. However in the context of Caribbean colonialism and in particular from the standpoint of the government of the United States, gripped with Cold War fever, the Jagan administration appeared alarmingly radical. The upshot was that after a mere 90 days the constitution was revoked, the regime turned out of office and a White Paper published amidst claims of Communist influence (Jagan 1966, Reno 1964, Simms 1966, Smith 1962, Cmd 8980).

During the inter-regnum from 1954 to 1957 the country was ruled by the Governor with an appointed Council. Also during this period the PPP split, with L.F.S. Burnham breaking away to form the Peoples' National Congress (PNC). This was a momentous event since it set the stage for the titanic struggle between these two leaders that dominated the Guyanese political scene thereafter. Of even more significance was the fact that this re-introduced the racial element into the national political system, since Burnham took with him his main power base, the African urban workers, leaving Jagan with most of his support amongst rural Indians, especially on the sugar estates. This racial polarisation between the two main political parties has

persisted ever since, despite frequent protestations to the contrary, and has tended to deepen rather than lessen.

With the resumption of normal political processes in 1957 there was a new election and Jagan's PPP again came to power, though this time with a reduced majority under a new constitution with only half of the legislature elected. This meant that Burnham was now in opposition allied with the United Force, a right-wing party mainly supported by businessmen. As we have seen (Chapter 5) many land development projects came to fruition in this period and much benefit went to the rice industry as a result of Government programmes. Eventually the Government also sought to expand its role more towards a socialist goal again by establishing links with Cuba and seeking to re-structure the economy.

It was this latter attempt that brought about the next major development, for in introducing a budget in 1962 which sought to alter the tax burden against the wealthier sections of the society, the Government provided the Opposition with an opportunity for mounting a campaign of total hostility, including extra-parliamentary activities. From then until 1964 the country entered into a period of severe unrest that bordered on civil war, and which is generally known as the Troubles or the Disturbances - with shades of the experience of Northern Ireland. There was a general strike that not only brought the economy to a standstill but also by freezing the port of Georgetown soon prevented the importation of essential foodstuffs and so increased the hardships encountered by the populace. There were riots and arson which destroyed large parts of the business centre of Georgetown, and there were killings, bombings and frequent

intimidation, as has been described for Windsor Forest (see Chapter 4) (Jagan 1966; Reno 1964; Glasgow 1970 Henfrey 1972; Simms 1966).

It is not surprising that it is these cases, some of them bordering on the atrocity level, that are remembered. Altogether 176 people were killed in this period, some of them brutally and some of them accidentally. There were undoubtedly terrorist elements on both sides who were allowed more licence at this time to perpetrate such acts, as we have seen in the case of the attempted bombing in Windsor Forest. However, there is still continued argument about the extent to which all incidents were planned. Nevertheless the way in which the Opposition represented a real and vigorous security threat to the the established Government must count against them, and there is convincing evidence that they obtained substantial support from overseas interests that were opposed to the Jagan government (Sunday Times 16th April 1967). There is therefore good reason to consider the Jagan government as being 'destabilised' by the CIA and other American interests (Henfrey 1972:70). To assist them in maintaining public order the Government had to call on Britain as the ultimate authority to send in troops, which she did, and order was eventually restored. However the country had undergone a traumatic experience and deep wounds had been opened that still remain to be healed.

THE DISTURBANCES AND WINDSOR FOREST

Although Windsor Forest was not one of the major focuses of conflict at that time, it did not altogether escape the effects of the time, as has been mentioned already. The 1960 Census shows the village as having 173 Africans, 2,391 Indians, 24 Chinese and 59 others living there, making the village 90% Indian. By 1972 the

number of Africans was down to 9 in all, the Chinese were 41 in number and there were 21 others, mainly people of mixed race and Portuguese. On the other hand the Indians now totalled 2772 and the village had become 97.3% Indian.

As was mentioned in Chapter 4 the Africans had left for a community in which their ethnic group was in a majority and where they felt safe. It was a pattern repeated throughout the country and there were people in Windsor Forest who had moved from Wismar, the bauxite mining town in the interior which was predominantly African and where some of the worst atrocities took place. Similarly a few miles down the coast was a large settlement of corrugated shacks squatting on the sugar estate's frontlands, the homes of Indians who had fled from other villages. It is a sight that is common throughout the Guyanese coastland.

In the village the main damage was the burning of the 'Ark' or logie', the two-storey tenement building in which most of the African population lived. This encouraged most of them to go, though others were driven out by the hostility of their Indian neighbours, and some were even attacked in their houses at night. There were those who were fortunate to be able to dismantle their house and take it away, as is not uncommon in a country where almost all houses are of wood, whereas others less fortunate had virtually to leave everything and run. On the other hand there were examples of solidarity and compassion as Indians defended their African neighbours from Indians or warned them of intending attacks. Nevertheless the village as a whole was against the Africans staying, and I did not meet any villager who felt any real regret at their going and most professed themselves delighted.

As has been mentioned in Chapter 4 there were only two major incidents of violence in the village, although they were significant. One involved the African station master who was attacked and badly wounded. According to some accounts he was the focus of villagers' frustration at the activities of other Africans, whilst according to others he had boasted of his ability to defend himself and so invited attack. The incident took place when the brother of a girl from the village heard that she had been roughly treated by a group of Africans when crossing from Georgetown on the ferry. This kind of treatment was common at the time and also occurred when trains passed through villages of hostile ethnic groups. The youth was very distressed by the incident and led a large crowd to the station where the station master's arm was badly cut. However he survived the incident and still works for the Transport Department on the East Coast. One of the participants in the other incident was not so lucky.

This incident takes us back into the realm of village politics, for although the village is predominantly Indian and tends to support the PPP this support is not total, even amongst Indians. A number of successful farmers, shopkeepers and businessmen, perhaps 15-20 in all, were supporters of the United Force, the right wing party of millionaire businessman Peter D'Aguiar. Meetings of this group were held at the shop of Amir, the least successful of the Khan brothers, right at the focal point of the village. However he suffered for this eventually when at the height of the tension his shop was looted in broad daylight by angry PPP supporters. Later nobody could be found to corroborate his identification of the culprits, despite the fact that many people saw the event.

Ram was the Secretary of the Settlers' Committee and the unofficial leader of the village. He was a large hardworking man who after a rather wild youth had become a devout Aryan and dedicated PPP activist. He was a tireless worker for what he saw as the interests of the people and he was one of the leading lights of the village political scene. He was largely responsible for the setting up of the panchayat' or village council of respected elder members of the community aimed at settling internal disputes amongst Indians by discussion and persuasion without having to go the authorities in the troubled times. It apparently did some good work and even continued to function spasmodically after things had returned to a more normal state. But it did not have any real powers nor did it have the support of all the people. Furthermore it did not cover non-Indians.

On the other hand the security forces encouraged the formation of a Home Guard in the village. This was to protect the village and was composed of 'prominent' members of the community who were to patrol the village at night and maintain a curfew. It is not clear how the members were selected, whether by the District Commissioner or by the security forces directly, but the Home Guard ended up being composed predominantly of UF supporters. To make matters worse, Ram, Secretary of the Settlers' Committee and so the nearest to an official spokesman that there was, who had shown his interest in community solidarity by founding the panchayet and who undoubtedly had the support of the vast majority of the village population, was passed over for the leadership of the Home Guard in favour of a Chinese businessman who was the leader of the UF group in the village.

The result of this was that the Home Guard were accused of implementing their powers in a partial and political way. It seems that some old scores were settled, with some PPP supporters being reported for breaking the curfew when in fact they had not done so and yet others being given some 'licks' with the batons the Home Guard carried. However given the fact that the majority of UF supporters were rather timid middle aged businessmen and farmers anxious to protect their property, it is hard to see them as the oppressive revenge squad that they were sometimes portrayed as being.

It is against this background that the second incident of violence in the village took place. A PPP activist from the village persuaded a group of young men to throw a hand grenade, which he supplied, into the house of the leader of the Home Guard at night. However those involved got themselves so drunk in preparation for the event that they bungled it. The leader failed to throw the grenade after removing the pin and it went off in his hand, blowing his arm off. He died from loss of blood before he reached hospital. No others were injured and no charges were made. The activist moved from the village to Vreed en Hoop and continued to work in the RMB where he has a senior post.

Although race is usually portrayed as the main underlying theme in the conflicts of this time, it does not appear to have been relevant on this occasion. Generally the Chinese were not involved in the main racial conflicts which were confined to Africans and Indians. Furthermore the racial element was never mentioned when people discussed the incident with me, whereas they were only too keen to mention it in relating other incidents. Far more emphasis was placed

on the political allegiance of the intended victim and the way he was seen to be acting towards the village. However I did not meet anybody who supported the idea of bombing his house, and the incident was most usually explained in terms of the PPP activist seeking to curry favour with his superiors and so advance his career. It was, apparently, largely because of the hostility of villagers that he decided to leave the community.

There was another incident that occurred at the same time and which had repercussions for the future, but which also lacked a racial element, and that was the affair of the Health Centre. In 1960 the PPP Government had built a concrete Health Centre on the frontlands of Windsor Forest by the public road. This consisted of two rooms on the ground floor to serve as a clinic and a flat above in which lived the resident nurse. It was generally agreed to be a worthwhile addition to the services of the District Midwife, who was resident in the village, especially for the mothers of young babies who could take them to their clinics more easily, but also for general accidents, since the nearest hospital was nearly five miles away.

However with the upsets of the disturbances the nurse, an African, felt exposed and lonely since there were no other houses nearby. Eventually she was indeed threatened and frightened away. After this the Health Centre was looted and gutted by the residents of the village, leaving only the empty shell of the building. The most useful items, such as washbasins, a water pump and furniture were quickly removed and it is well known in the village which people still have them in their houses. The rest of the building was simply smashed.

Although there was a slight racial element to the incident, in that the nurse was an African, she had nevertheless got on well with the residents since she had been in the village and had continued to treat her patients as usual. Nevertheless she formed an easy target for Indian hostility and was one of the first to go when the atmosphere became really tense. This resulted in a very real diminution of the amenities of the village, for now those who needed medical attention had to travel through largely African areas to get to the hospital, which, together with the inconvenience and expense of such travel, was an additional discouragement.

The women were generally critical of the action of destroying the Health Centre, since they suffered most. However it never developed into a really divisive issue in the community, and part of the reason for this might be that the Centre had not been in operation long enough for its facilities to be widely missed. Rather it tended to be seen as an opportunity that had now passed out of their reach.

Nevertheless its absence provided a useful political lever and its restoration featured prominently in the village's demands from Government. In 1970 the Settlers' Committee went to see the Minister of Health on the matter and:

"After a protracted discussion the Committee considered the urgency and need of the facility of the Health Centre, also the sufferings of the expectant mothers who had to travel from Windsor Forest, La Jalousie and neighbouring villages to Vreed en Hoop and Den Amstel clinics."

(Report of the Settlers' Committee, 1968-70, p. 18)

However it was three more years before anything was done about the Health Centre and it had featured in several other political manoeuvres by then, as we shall see.

THE PNC GOVERNMENTS

At the national level the disturbances were eventually controlled and the country returned to some form of normality. This led to the constitutional conference to negotiate the country's independence, but was characterised by disagreement, intransigence and signs of deadlock. The deadlock was unexpectedly and inexplicably broken by Jagan agreeing to accept a form of electoral system proposed by Britain. Since the Colonial Secretary at the time was Duncan Sandys, a right-winger deeply opposed to Jagan, this left the latter wide open to manipulation, and Sandys seized his chance. Britain proposed a very unusual and extreme form of proportional representation that would make it very difficult for the PPP to win an election, and Jagan was obliged to accept it. This effectively destroyed the chances of the PPP coming to power again and the reasons for Jagan's lack of resolve at the final hurdle is as inexplicable as it was disastrous as far as he was concerned (Newman 1964; Henfrey 1972).

This system was in operation for the elections held in 1964, and although the PPP obtained a plurality of the seats, they did not obtain a majority. A coalition of the PNC and the UF took office and led the country to independence in 1966. With Jagan out of office Burnham took control and has been the Prime Minister ever since, until in 1980 he became President.

Burnham quickly emerged as the dominant force in the ruling coalition and was able to survive the withdrawal of the UF. The PNC were able to consolidate their hold on the levers of power for the 1968 elections to be rigged effectively, if not competently, to ensure their continuation in power (Henfrey 1972). Since then the party has

sought to entrench itself further by moulding the state structure to its own design. Thus the country became a republic in 1970, later to be re-defined as the world's first Co-operative Republic to reflect the party's new philosophy. This was later elaborated to be a 'socialist' philosophy (1974) to be followed by the the enunciation of the new principle of 'the paramountcy of the Party' which in certain circumstances put it above the official organs of Government. This has now fully flowered into a new constitution, approved under what was apparently a rigged referendum, with an executive President, L.F.S. Burnham.

On the way to this situation there were elections in 1973 just after I had left the field which were even more extensively, although not more competently, rigged than the 1968 ones had been. As a result of this the PPP boycotted the National Assembly for more than two years. However with the conversion of the PNC to socialism the PPP declared that this was sufficient for it to rejoin the Assembly and offer its 'critical support' to the regime on this basis.

Reference has already been made to the effects of the change of government on the rice industry: the end of the Cuban market, the end of subsidies and the collapse of the price paid to farmers. At the local level it was the PNC government that finally withdrew the administrative services from the housing areas of Windsor Forest and left the Settlers' Committee in the limbo of having responsibility for the area without the legal status of a Local Authority to enable it effectively to fulfill that responsibility. Although the plans for the removal of the administration had been considered for some time, it was nevertheless the PNC government that decided to go ahead with

the plan before the Local Authority issue had been fully resolved.

Thus the majority of the residents who supported the PPP came out of the traumatic years of the disturbances to find that they had control of their village, both ethnically and administratively, but with no legal authority, no resources and no connections with the sources of either. Thus the latter half of the 1960s was a period of anxiety, frustration and alienation for Indians in general, and for Windsor Forest in particular.

Yet as we have seen this was also the period of maximum labour displacement from rice and the beginning of the move to urban employment. Thus Indians had an ambivalent attitude towards Government, for on the one hand they felt excluded because 'their' party was no longer in power - a feeling made all the more acute by the animosity of the preceding years and the apprehension about how far the new regime's policy would be racially biased against them. On the other hand they were becoming more and more dependent on Government, both for the urban work that so many of them were now seeking and for the administrative support that the village generally needed.

This is clearly reflected in the case of the Health Centre. As we have seen the original destruction was at the hands of the local residents and PPP supporters. Furthermore there was a political antagonism involved, but very little of a racial element. Yet despite the clear evidence that the destruction of the Centre was not necessary and not attributable to the general conflicts of the disturbances the Settlers' Committee continually claimed that it was

the responsibility of Government to deal with it. According to the way in which I heard the matter discussed in the village during my stay, this viewpoint accurately represented the opinions of the Indian villagers. During their visit to the Minister of Health in 1970 the Committee argued:

"The Committee pointed out that the Health Centre Project was a responsibility of the Government and the works should be carried out by them. The Minister explained that the people should be involved in the work, because they would take more care and interest to protect the Health Centre."

(Report of the Settlers' Committee 1968-70, p. 18)

THE MOVE TO A LOCAL AUTHORITY

During this time there was a continuing pressure for the area to become a Local Authority, but the Settlers' Committee and the residents continued to resist these moves:

"The various District Commissioners for the West Demerara area held several meetings with the Settlers' Committee to establish a Local Authority at Windsor Forest and La Jalousie. The Settlers' Committee vehemently opposed the formation of a Local Authority. The various District Commissioners also held several meetings with the settlers of Windsor Forest and La Jalousie. The question of the formation of a Local Authority was discussed at length. The settlers also opposed the establishment of a Local Authority in these two estates.

The Settlers' Committee made representation to the Ministry of Local Government and the President of Guyana, His Excellency Arthur Chung, in order to protest against the formation of a Local Authority at Windsor Forest and La Jalousie."

(ibid. p. 19)

The opposition of the residents tended to be based on a fear that Local Authority status would entail paying more taxes, which they were anxious to avoid. In addition the Settlers' Committee had a more technical argument which once more rested on the unique origins of Windsor Forest and La Jalousie and their special relationship to

Government, which was seen to revolve round the leasehold of the cultivation lands.

"The reasons for the objection were that the Government had been spending large sums of money to establish Land Settlement Schemes throughout the country, whereas they spent nothing to develop Windsor Forest and La Jalousie. The work was done by the settlers themselves without any assistance from the government.

To put us in the same category with the other people, without reasonable compensation for the efforts and labour of the settlers and their children, was unfair and unjust."

(ibid, p. 19)

In addition there was the continuing, and related, problem of the extent to which the cultivation areas were to be excluded from the valuation of the Local Authority, leaving all the revenue to be raised from the housing areas. On the one hand the farmers stood to gain in that those who had leases for government land would be excused payment of additional rates for this, but on the other hand they would lose if they then had to pay additional rates from the housing areas to make up this deficiency.

In the midst of this process, however, events overtook the Settlers' Committee for the Government decided to create a Local Authority in the area as part of a programme of local government reform throughout the country. This was to be named the Nouvelle Flanders-La Jalousie Local Authority, though the grandly French sounding name hid the fact that the vast majority of the population were drawn from Windsor Forest and La Jalousie, with the remainder of the area composed largely of cultivation land with few houses. This is brought out in Table 3/3 which gives the composition of the Local Authority area. In part this was a useful development, for not only did this extension of the boundaries of the Local Authority beyond

those originally considered make these now contiguous with another Local Authority, but also ensured that the new Authority contained enough privately owned agricultural land to be able to raise an adequate revenue from its rates without having to touch the thorny subject of the Colony Lands and their leases.

However in view of the continuing political tension in the country and the PPP's sense of grievance at the rigging of the 1968 general election they did not contest the local government elections held throughout the country in 1970. Thus in Windsor Forest:

"Whilst the [Settlers'] Committee was in the course of making representations to the Government for compensation for the right of the labour of the settlers, also to protect their interests generally, ten Councillors from Windsor Forest and two from La Jalousie were elected unopposed on a PNC ticket for the Local Government elections for the Nouvelle Flanders-La Jalousie District."

(ibid, p. 20)

Given the strength of feeling in the area against the PNC government because of its ethnic power base and its treatment of the rice industry it is in many ways surprising that anyone could be found to stand for election at all, and indeed it was not easy to find candidates. It seems that of the ten from Windsor Forest at least three were promised the Chairmanship of the Authority at various times. They were Nan, the eventual Chairman, Shamir the Muslim meiji and owner of the largest shop in the village, and Tiwari the senior Hindu pandit. Although Tiwari was well known in the area and had many contacts, including leading politicians, in other communities and Georgetown, he had never been involved in public debates and community affairs generally. He thus lacked any credibility for this very public office. His son was also elected a Councillor, but at that

time he moved to Georgetown and neither of them ever attended any Council meetings.

Shamir was the only possible rival to Nan and with his economic power in the community, family connections, contacts with national Muslim organisations and general religious duties, he could have made an effective Chairman. Exactly how he lost to Nan was a topic of continuing speculation in the village and there were many rumours about bribes, broken promises and deals with outside politicians. However he was flawed by the conflicts within the jamaat that he had generated and the associated scandal. Also he lacked Nan's steely resolve.

In some ways Nan was an unlikely candidate for such a contentious position, since he had not had much of an active role in politics before. He was a successful farmer who had been a keen PPP supporter in the 1950s, but who had later moved over to the UF. He was also a leading member of the Arya Samaj and had been a member of the national committee. However on the whole he did not appear to be a natural politician, unlike a number of other village members.

One of the reasons why he was attractive to Government was that he had shown a willingness to go along with official plans. As has been described already, he had formed, some years earlier, a cane farming co-operative to take advantage of Government's policies in this area. This had managed to get finance and equipment to clear 44 acres of 'savannah' at the rear of La Jalousie that had originally served as grazing land for oxen since it was not suitable for rice cultivation. With the development of mechanised cultivation there was now no need

for such extensive grazing and so the land was available for other uses. The intention was to use 22 acres for cane and 22 acres for provisions.

He had not managed to attract a very impressive collection of farmers to this venture, but it was not condemned too hastily since it could be justified as a way of obtaining economic aid from Government. However it was a dismal failure and never effectively got off the ground. Its prospects were not helped by the fact that there already existed in the village a successful cane producing group which left cultivation to individual farmers and only provided collective services in areas such as obtaining fertiliser, arranging transportation to the estate for grinding and eventual sale of the cane. To make matters worse this group was run by Nan's brother who lived next-door-but-one to him. They did not speak to each other.

He also had a son who was a typical product of his father's earlier economic success in the rice industry of the 1950s, in that Nan had been able to send him to a private secondary school in Georgetown. After this he had obtained a clerical job in the civil service and eventually had managed to obtain leave to study in Britain. There he had managed to take a series of technical qualifications and had now returned to Guyana as a transport economic planner. Nan himself, as was common with men of his generation, had had no formal schooling beyond primary level and did not cope very well in more formal situations. The general assumption was therefore that he tended to be guided by his son Seeram in such matters. Certainly Seeram had a considerable influence on village affairs, as we shall see.

Of the remaining Councillors, one was Amir, the brother of Shamir and the looting of whose shop in the disturbances has been mentioned. Two others were previous UF supporters who had played a relatively minor role in village affairs, whilst the final three were political nonentities who appeared to have been talked into standing in order to make up the numbers. Thus Nan effectively dominated the Council and after a few minor tussles with Shamir, during which he managed to establish his authority beyond question, he was from then on the living embodiment of the Local Authority as far as the community was concerned, and he did everything to sustain this view.

THE RATE PAYERS' ASSOCIATION

Meanwhile the old Settlers' Committee had not been idle since its official demise:

"The Committee held several public meetings and explained the effect that the Local Authority would have on the residential areas, as well as the cultivation areas.

At the public meetings the Committee recommended that a Rate Payers' Association should be formed to watch the interests of the rate payers."

(ibid, p. 21)

Needless to say this was approved and so the leadership of the Settlers' Committee transformed itself into the leadership of the Rate Payers' Association, despite the fact that at the time nobody had paid any rates, and the Association's main aim was to discourage them from doing so. Unfortunately the irony of this escaped Ram and his associates.

The Rate Payers were led by Ram and now the village was shaping up for the major struggle between Ram and Nan that dominated the community's political scene during my fieldwork. For after many years

of being the semi-official leader of the village Ram was out in the cold, despite the fact that he still retained the support of the overwhelming majority of the residents and retained his political charisma. On the other hand Nan had featured little in village affairs, had equivocated politically and was now set to lord it over the village with the support of the authorities. However in many ways Ram and Nan were suprisingly similar. Like Nan Ram was a successful rice farmer, though not as successful as he should have been, as his wife frequently remarked with some bitterness. For his taste for public affairs had meant that for many years he had devoted large amounts of his time to this at the expense of his economic interests.

He had for many years been involved with the Rice Producers Association and had some time previously become the national President, but as has been mentioned already the Rice Producers Association no longer had the power and influence it had had under the PPP regime. Now its rôle was being replaced by that of the Rice Action Committees under the Guyana Rice Corporation. Nan was the chairman of the Rice Action Committee for West Demerara, and this was another major source of friction between him and Ram, so that claims and counter claims about the Government's rice policy often featured in public debates about the affairs of the Local Authority. Ram took his responsibilities in the RPA very seriously and was very often away visiting other parts of the country to see crops and to help farmers with their complaints, and with the reduced funding available to the RPA much of the cost of this came from his own pocket.

He had also maintained his deep involvement with the PPP, and because of the close links between the RPA and the PPP he was also

influential in the latter's national councils, though he did not appear to harbour wider political ambitions. However he remained implacably opposed to the PNC government on party political and ideological grounds. Needless to say he considered Nan's defection as contemptible.

He had long been a member of the Arya Samaj and like Nan had been a member of the national committee, and during my stay in the village he had the satisfaction of defeating Nan in the election for the new committee. He had also been the President of the Windsor Forest samaj for some time and here too he put in a considerable amount of time, attending services and holding meetings. For all these public works, but especially for his contributions to agriculture, he had been awarded an M.B.E. before the end of the colonial régime. However, characteristically, he had turned it down on ideological grounds - much to his wife's disgust. Nan on the other hand had been awarded the M.S. as the new Republic's equivalent. This too had been awarded for services to agriculture, and Nan had accepted it gratefully, which provided yet another contrast between the two men.

Thus by the time of the establishment of the Local Authority the contrasts between them were substantial. From parallel beginnings in rice farming, religion and politics they had grown steadily apart. Now Ram, the bustling, earnest, concerned and popular Ram, the lifelong man of affairs who had been the village's leader till recently was out in the cold; replaced by the austere, aloof, stubborn and determined Nan who had committed the unpardonable sin of siding openly with the PNC government and who was now poised to impose that party's policies on the village. It was not something that Ram was going to take lying down.

As was to be expected the Rate Payers held a series of meetings throughout the Local Authority area to 'put their point of view' - in fact to attack and embarrass the Authority where possible. Most of these meetings were held in Windsor Forest on the steps of Amir's shop at the focal point of the village. At these meetings most of the talking was done by Ram, but he was also joined by Roop, who had become a kind of deputy leader. Roop was a well educated farmer who came from a wealthy family and owned a store in the village. His family owned a large amount of rice land along the coast and he had a part share in his brother's multi-stage rice mill near Vreed en Hoop. He had been a prominent member of the RPA in the 1950s and had been one of its delegates on a mission to Trinidad and Barbados to negotiate revised prices.

He was a very articulate and powerful speaker with a voice that carried for a great distance. But he was not as respected as Ram, for he was suspected of being an opportunist. He had a history of flirtations with several political movements and had been a UF supporter in the early 1960s. Lately his financial affairs had taken a tumble after he had bought 38 acres of rice land on an uncultivated part of the coast some 15 miles from Windsor Forest. This was proving difficult to cultivate and he was short of cash, especially since like all the other shops in the rural areas his was not paying as well as it once did. It was widely assumed that secretly he was dealing for a large loan from Government or some form of rehabilitation as a member of a committee or two. To me he confessed his desire to emigrate to the United States once his daughter, who had been sponsored by an employer, became permanently resident over there. In the meantime he was the scourge of the Local Authority.

Usually the meetings started off with Ram addressing 10-20 men at approximately 6 pm, but soon after the numbers would swell and most meetings attracted 50-60 people, all men or boys with no women. Most of the audience were rice farmers or labourers and the hard core of regular attenders were those men who tended to congregate in the area from 4 pm onwards to 'gaiff' about the day's events. Not many of the clerical and professional workers came to these meetings, but if they did they often stood a little to one side, perhaps with a small group of friends half listening to the speeches.

The main topic of concern was the taxation of the village that would come as a result of the creation of the Local Authority, and in particular the 'rating exercise' the Authority was to carry out to determine the rateable value of all the properties in its area. This was tied in too with the old question of the extent to which the lease land would also be taxed by the Authority. However the topic soon developed into a general consideration of the Government's rice policy, and an attack on this. As has been mentioned Ram was President of the RPA and as such travelled widely throughout the country. He was thus able to supply a steady stream of horror stories of how things had gone wrong in other parts of the country as a result of Government policies. He was also a regular contributor, though anonymously, to the 'Mirror' the PPP's evening daily paper, which he distributed in the area. He was thus continually on the look out for tales of Government incompetence to publicise, and there were plenty of examples to be found.

Nan was the chairman of the local Rice Action Committee and so not only associated with the Government's overall policy, but also with

implementing it at the local level. Thus he could be attacked both on the Local Authority front and on the Rice Action Committee front, and he invariably was. The speeches were delivered with considerable heat in the didactic and somewhat hectoring style of Guyanese politics. Usually the Councillors were wise enough to stay away and it was always Nan, the embodiment of the Local Authority and the PNC government, who was attacked.

Jagan had apparently once used a phrase about those "who hang their mouths where the soup is falling" to characterise those who supported the Government for their own ends, and the term 'soup-catcher' had caught on as a political epithet. The Councillors were characterised as 'soup-catchers' and rather pitied for their obvious venality and lack of sophistication to have taken such a demeaning path to Government patronage.

Nan, on the other hand, was seen differently. He was the person who had most obviously sided with the Government and who had done so openly and uncompromisingly. He did not have the justification of a Government job to protect or the 'class' orientation of the shopkeepers. Rather he was seen as revelling in the authority and power that his office gave him, and so was attacked the most fiercely. He only attended one of Ram's meetings and stood at the back till he was forced to leave by the increasingly virulent attacks on him from the crowd.

By contrast the Local Authority held only one public meeting, and that ended in chaos. For Nan was not a good public speaker and was not able to control his hostile audience. Furthermore Ram and Roop

heckled from the floor, and eventually Ram came up onto the steps of Amir's shop to argue directly with Nan. This exchange became very heated and confused, so that in the end Nan was forced to abandon the meeting. Thus as far as public meetings were concerned the field was completely dominated by the Rate Payers' Association.

In addition to these public meetings there were a number of incidents in which the opposition to the Local Authority was expressed. The first occurred just as I was moving into the village and I was not able to observe all the early stages. It revolved round the problems that plagued the village water supply. There had been an artesian well in the village since 1946 but this had proved to be inadequate in the dry season, and so with the encouragement of the Settlers' Committee pressurised water had been installed in the village in the early 1960s, and by now 87% of the households in the village had it. However the pressure was not good and in some parts of the village it hardly worked at all, and nobody was able to get water upstairs to washbasins and showers that had been installed some time ago in anticipation of a good supply.

To improve the pressure the water engineers recommended that a pipe be laid down one of the streets to join two parts of the system, and it was agreed that this would go ahead. However it was also decided that it should be an aided self-help project whereby the Government would provide the pipes and the villagers would provide the labour to dig the trench. However[^] this was something the people were unwilling to do.

The Rate Payers' spoke out against the idea, claiming that it was

the responsibility of Government to give them the water supply that they had been promised. This received a sympathetic response from the inhabitants, since it not only coincided with their feelings on the issue, but also with the general style of their relationship with Government, as was also encountered in the case of the Settlers' Committee's views on the restoration of the Health Centre. Thus the pipes were delivered, the people exhorted to dig the trench by Nan and the other Councillors, but nothing was done. Then some of the pipe couplings were stolen and the remainder were withdrawn. Finally after some three months the Local Authority hired local labourers to dig the trench and the pipe was finally laid and connected. This brought some improvement to the water supply, but not the complete solution all had hoped for.

This was presented as a victory for the Rate Payers, as indeed in many ways it was. However there were some mixed feelings about this affair for although most people felt let down about the water supply they nevertheless wanted it to be improved, and by refusing to lay the pipe they were only continuing their existing privations. In particular the problems fell most heavily on the women, who cooked and washed with the water, but it was the men who would have had to do the work, and it was they who did not wish to be seen to be breaking solidarity. There were no supporters of the Local Authority in the street concerned and although there were those who told me later that they would not have minded digging the trench and were anxious to obtain the improved water supply, they did not want to be seen to be the first to give in. Thus a solid front was maintained in this case.

Soon after this the second incident took place. In the late 1960s

a Community Development Committee had been formed with Ram as Chairman. The Committee had then gone on to recommend that four streets be metalled with bitumen, and had embarked on a series of lengthy negotiations with the Community Development officials and engineers. The whole project was expected to cost a notional \$40,000, of which half was to be provided by the village in the form of labour. Temple Street was designated the first to be attempted, and there was every sign of considerable Government commitment.

"A letter signed by the Prime Minister, the Honourable L.F.S. Burnham, was read to the settlers stating that the work on these four streets should be expedited and the streets should be completed as quickly as possible. Big publicity was made over the Radio and Newspapers that work would start soon on these projects."

(Report of Settlers' Committee
1968-70, p. 17)

However things did not work out quite this way, for although a contract was supposed to have been placed for the supply of the raw materials they did not arrive. Then, several years later, soon after the Local Authority had been established, it was announced that Temple Street was about to be made up with a tar surface. Under the terms of the agreement the labour required for the project was to be supplied by the village, and it now fell to the Local Authority to mobilise this. Needless to say the Rate Payers opposed it, claiming that the village had been let down and that the agreement had lapsed. Their attitude stiffened all the more, and Ram became particularly annoyed, when it was realised that instead of the sand and rock basis specified for the foundations, there was to be no more than some desultory patching of holes before the bitumen surface was laid. Ram railed on at numerous meetings that this was not what had been promised, and without proper foundations the road would not last, and so was worthless. In this he was proved right, for soon the surface began to

sink and deform, and whilst it remained an improvement over the previous road, it manifestly was not what the residents wanted and expected.

The turnout to prepare for the bitumen was unimpressive, with the two Councillors who lived in the street doing the most work. Some other householders did help, however, either claiming that they had agreed to work under the original arrangement, or that since the bitumen was going to be laid anyway they might as well try to ensure that they got the maximum benefit from it. However most householders did not take part.

Both sides sought to distance themselves from the Temple Street fiasco, with the Local Authority claiming that it was an agreement made before they existed, and seeking to put the blame on Ram. He on the other hand charged that the problem did not lie with the original specification, but rather with the way it had been implemented. In this he was fortunate that the final Report of the Settlers' Committee which had circulated shortly before this incident, gave detailed descriptions of the agreement with the Community Development Department and of the specification of the roads, so that it was clear that he had agreed to something quite different to what was finally done. Rather he was able to portray the incident as an indication of the perfidy of the PNC government, and of the way in which the Local Authority did not really have any power over the Government apparatus, but had merely to accept what the Party chose to hand out. This, on the whole, was a more accurate interpretation than that offered by Nan and the Councillors.

Thus by the end of the first year of the Local Authority the Rate Payers (who had so far still not paid any rates) were riding high; they had held a series of successful meetings and had managed to undermine the effectiveness of two projects associated with the Local Authority. The latter, on the other hand, appeared to have done nothing but make vague statements about getting going and vague plans for the future. However things were beginning to develop and in the case of the property valuation, what looked like the Rate Payers biggest chance of success turned out to be somewhat different in the long run.

The valuation of all the properties in the Local Authority area was done by a firm of valuers from Georgetown, and although there was criticism and complaint from some, they do appear to have done a competent and professional job. Until this valuation was complete the Authority could raise no income and plan no expenditure. It was largely this, coupled with the need to establish its own internal system, that accounts for the lack of action in its first year of existence.

Once the valuation was published in 1972 there was a noisy protest. There did appear to be a small number of anomalies, but most people appeared grudgingly to accept the valuation of their own property. Ram and the Rate Payers however denounced the outcome and in a series of noisy meetings he claimed he had over a hundred owners who were willing to challenge their valuations. By this means the Rate Payers would ensure that no rates were paid and that the Local Authority remained stillborn. However when the time came for the registration of objections only a handful actually filed these, and most of the

remainder dropped out at the magistrates court. So ultimately the legal challenge of the Rate Payers fizzled out and nobody managed to challenge their valuation successfully.

Instead the vast majority of householders paid all or part of their rates and the Authority was able to embark on a programme of expenditure. It was still to be seen, however, how effective they would be in ensuring that rates were actually paid each year, since the experience of other Local Authorities in Guyana was not impressive in this respect. Nevertheless the Local Authority were able to negate some of the Rate Payers main plans, for the estimates of their expenditure showed that the leased Colony lands were not to be taxed after all.

After this there began to occur a number of incidents that were more favourable to Nan and the Local Authority. The first of these was concerned, yet again, with the Health Centre.

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

There had been several attempts to 'develop' the village in the past, in addition to the Government projects to provide piped water, surface the roads and renovate the Health Centre. In 1965 the District Commissioner asked the Settlers' Committee for projects to include in the Government's 1966-70 Development Programme. The Committee responded with the ambitious programme which included covering four streets with sand and stones, eighteen streets with burnt earth, the restoration of drains, trenches and kokers and the erection of 'one communal market'. This was to cost over \$32,000 in materials alone, excluding the labour involved. For good measure:

"The Settlers' Committee also recommended that a Telephone Booth be installed at Windsor Forest and a Community Centre and Pavilion be erected on a self-help basis."

(ibid, p. 10)

Not surprisingly nothing more was heard of this ambitious set of proposals.

In 1966 the area's Community Development Officer came to the village and held a meeting with prominent people to see about the possibility of mounting an Independence Project. After some discussion a Community Centre was selected and the Officer wanted to form an Independence Committee:

"Mr. Ram pointed out that since the Government recognised the Settlers' Committee and the Committee had already recommended a Community Centre the application should be made through the Settlers' Committee.

Members did not agree with the suggestion, they urged that a Special Committee should be formed immediately. Mr. Ram voted against. He said that Special Committee was not elected by the people and as a result they would not represent the wishes and aspirations of the settlers."

(ibid p. 14)

Nevertheless they went ahead and formed the Independence Committee.

The Report of the Settlers' Committee was, of course, written by Ram with the benefit of hindsight to distance himself from what turned out to be a fiasco. As he goes on:

"The Independence Committee had drawn up a big programme for the celebration of Independence in our village. On Thursday 26th May 1966 the cornerstone of the Community Centre was laid. A sheet of tentest was posted, carrying the name 'Windsor Forest Independence Project'. Over four years had passed and whilst Independence Projects were put up in various parts of the country the Windsor Forest Independence Project was more or less a political gimmick."

(ibid, p. 14)

As one would expect, Ram then goes on to rub in the political message and to reiterate the traditional view that the fault lay with Government since it was their responsibility to build the project:

"Our youths were in a dire need for a Community Centre to spend some of their leisure time. The people, and especially the youths of Windsor Forest were terribly disappointed. The Government was obligated to the people and especially the the youths in our village. The Settlers' Committee hope the Government would approve of the application in order to start erecting the Community Centre expeditiously."

(ibid, p. 14)

Needless to say this was written in the confident expectation that nothing would be done. Indeed the Community Centre was frequently talked about as a joke, a pipe dream that existed only in the plans of bureaucrats and in the speeches of politicians. Yet within four years of Ram writing the above, Windsor Forest had one of the largest and most impressive Community Centres on the West Coast.

Mention has already been made of how Ram founded a Community Development Committee under his leadership and set about getting street projects registered under the Aided Self Help Scheme. The original intention was for four streets to be covered in sand and stones as a watered-down version of the 1966 Development Programme plan. In the end two streets were half covered, though only poorly:

"The Community Development Committee had complained about the inadequate supply of quarry cleanings and sand and also the delay to complete the projects. The Community Development Committee also complained about the inferior quality of material used on the two streets."

(ibid, p. 6)

With a new Community Development Officer, an American, a renewed attempt was made to get the streets covered, though this time on an even grander scale:

"It was decided that since the Government had approved the four self-help schemes and work had already started, the four street projects should be completed, and since the President of Guyana, H.E. Arthur Chung was a former resident of Windsor Forest, the four streets should be re-surfaced with bitumen in order that the streets would serve an all weather purpose."

(ibid)

This was the origin of the fiasco of the poor surfacing of Temple Street, with which Ram later sought to damage the Local Authority.

It was against this background that a meeting was called by a new Community Development Officer to found a new Community Development Committee in Windsor Forest. Of the forty or so organisations invited to send representatives to the meeting, only 24 turned up. At the meeting the Community Development Officer (CDO) offered a standard constitution and proposed the election of a committee. Ram on the other hand talked of thinking things over and perhaps working with the old Community Development Committee (CDC). However he was later outvoted and the new CDC was nominated. The nominations were dominated by the PNC faction, with several Councillors active in this role, giving the appearance of operating a pre-arranged plan. To counter this the Rate Payers nominated Henry, their notional Secretary, as Chairman of the CDC, but he was defeated in favour of Seeram, Nan's son.

The remaining office holders were either educated young men with clerical jobs or followers of Seeram. Thus with the exception of Henry, who had succeeded in getting a general Committee place after losing the Chairmanship, the CDC was dominated by educated young men and PNC followers, especially since the Local Authority had three representatives on the Committee under the standard constitution

adopted. However what Ram did not know was that even Henry was beginning to 'swing' and eventually ended up a close ally of Seeram's. The CDC also co-opted onto it Munir the Muslim businessman and the Public Health Officer who lived on the edge of the village and who normally had only a passing involvement in its affairs.

The CDC began meeting regularly each month under the enthusiastic and well organised leadership of Seeram. At the early meetings there were lengthy discussions of possible projects and eventually it was decided to make the rebuilding of the Health Centre the first priority -or 'number one project' as the fashionable term had it. The Committee also agreed at an early meeting to the amendment of the constitution to allow for the expulsion of those who did not attend regularly and also for the censure of those who acted against the interests of the CDC.

It was generally assumed that the CDC was another front organisation of the Government and that it would lend support to the Local Authority but that little of tangible benefit would be seen by the community. However things were to prove otherwise, for it started with an enthusiastic fund raising exercise, with a small band of Committee members working their way through the village and La Jalousie. This was led by Munir who started things off by donating \$100 himself and persuading Boodhoo to donate \$150. Almost all houses gave something, usually \$1, although 47 households gave \$5 and 26 gave \$10. In all this raised \$1,240, and additional contributions from out of the village, mostly from business contacts of Munir's, raised the grand total to over \$1,600.

This information was chronicled in scrupulous detail on an immaculately typed and duplicated list running to eight pages which was widely circulated in the village to show that the money had all been accounted for. This was held to be in contrast to the \$500 that had been raised many years before for a hospital fund and which the CDC tried in vain to get back from the trustees, one of whom was Roop.

With this amount of money raised the CDC went to see the Minister of Health in July 1972 and were promised matching Government finance. Work was able to start in November 1972 and was just finished in time for the official opening by the Minister of Health, Mr. David Singh, on 6th January 1973, the day before I left Guyana. Thus in less than a year from its initial foundation the CDC had managed to raise the money, obtain Government support and actually renovate the Health Centre. This was an impressive achievement by any standards, but in comparison with the village's previous efforts it was absolutely amazing.

Furthermore the CDC had done more than the basic specification, for the Ministry had initially not been keen to electrify the building, but when one of the co-opted members of the CDC, an electrical supervisor and registered electrical contractor, offered to do the work for nothing, the Ministry supplied the materials. Similarly through Munir's business contacts several items were obtained cheaply and the cost of these was traded off against the cost of fencing the Centre's compound. This was erected by the CDC itself, and so further improved the amenities provided.

Not surprisingly Seeram, the CDC and the Local Authority all sought

to make the maximum of publicity out of this venture, and it was featured in a front-page photograph in the Government-controlled newspaper the day after it was opened. However most of the publicity was aimed at the locality and the local political struggle. In this the CDC was presented as an example of the new era, organised by the new men, who were educated, sophisticated and who knew how to deal with Government on its own terms

Seeram had deliberately sought to mould the CDC to this image, mainly by co-opting those whom he needed. During the first year he had co-opted Munir, well-connected businessman and experienced fund raiser; Bemaal the electrical supervisor and contractor; three clerks and two of the four senior civil servants in the village, including one who was about to move to Georgetown. He also encouraged these recruits to take on a range of newly created offices, such as Planning Officer, Public Relations and Publicity Officer, so that of the nine Officers only two were not either clerical workers or businessmen, and one of these was Henry who was being 'rewarded' for his defection from the Rate Payers. Finally Seeram used the non-attendance rule to remove Ram and Roop from the CDC, and publicised the fact in the newsletters that the CDC produced.

Although the CDC did not hold public meetings like the Rate Payers they were nevertheless able to get their message across, both in the house to house collections and in informal conversations. Here the contrast with the old guard, exemplified by Ram, was brought out. The new men of the CDC stressed that the old guard did not have the education to tackle something as big and as politically complicated as the restoration project - they had gone to the 'backdam university' as

Seeram cuttingly used to put it. They did not have enough experience of how bureaucracies worked to be able to tackle Government effectively. They did not have the technical expertise to present their case and they were tarnished with a political history that destroyed their credibility with Government.

Again and again the message was hammered home, that the Health Centre was only the beginning - this was the new world into which the CDC, the Local Authority and the PNC could lead the village. Government had the resources and those who knew how to get access to them could get results. The old confrontation politics of Ram were dead, now was the time for co-operation - Government had shown itself willing to deal with those it could trust, and with an established record of achievement they would be trusted again.

To emphasise this successful approach the CDC turned to their next project, the Community Centre, even before the Health Centre was finished. They held a joint meeting with the Local Authority and raised \$600 immediately, with Munir offering \$200 and Nan and Seeram \$100 each. Barely two weeks after the Health Centre was opened they had the agreement of the Minister of Co-operatives and Community Development for a new Community Centre.

To finance this the CDC organised a raffle and a bus excursion, as well as soliciting donations. This time they raised \$1,665. The labour provided for the construction was valued, somewhat optimistically, at \$10,000 and the whole building was valued at \$40,000. This means that Government provided goods and services in excess of \$28,000 for this project, compared with the \$2,000 for the

Health Centre. This seemed to indicate that Seeram was right, the CDC had managed to attract over \$30,000 of Government money to the village since its inception and in just over 18 months had completed two major projects costing some \$45,000. This was far more than Ram and the Settlers' Committee had ever dreamed of achieving.

THE CHANGING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT

However things were not quite as simple as all that. For Guyana is a poor country and the Government is always short of funds, so why should it wish to lavish so many of its scarce resources on Windsor Forest? Although the popular prejudice was that Africans were favoured by the Government, there had for some time been evidence of the PNC wishing to woo Indian communities, especially through community development projects. There are several examples of this process in other Indian communities in West Demerara, particularly in sugar estates where the projects took the form of schools and roads. These were all well known to the residents of Windsor Forest and frequently referred to in meetings and informal discussions when the topic of improving the village came up. Certainly in comparison with other villages, especially estate ones, Windsor Forest was less 'bright' and developed, and apart from major infrastructural improvements such as piped water and electricity it had changed little in amenity over the past 10-15 years.

Furthermore it was one of the largest villages in West Demerara and certainly the largest rice village, as well as being the largest community of any type in a five mile stretch of the coast. It had also enjoyed for some time a reputation for preserving the values of 'Indian culture' more effectively than most other communities (Smith

1966:77), which was now allied with a reputation for PPP support and activism. It therefore represented a logical target for a party in power seeking to undermine opposition to its regime.

The Local Authority obviously formed the spearhead of the attack, but this represented a long-term approach, whereas the CDC would offer more short-term benefits. Then there were the elections. These were due in 1973 and although there was speculation that they would be rigged as they were in 1968, and thus a fiasco, there was nevertheless interest in how things would work out in the event of their not being rigged.

To this end one of the 'token' Indian Ministers visited the PNC group in 1972 and amongst other things asked if the villagers would vote for the PNC. He was told by Seeram that they would, if they got a better share of Government money and jobs, as well as a better deal from their MP than they got at present. The incumbent MP, an African from the West Bank, was heartily loathed in the village for his arrogant and superior attitude to them and was usually only seen in the place when he wanted free rice and other perks. The people were so dissatisfied with what he produced by way of jobs and other Government benefits that he sometimes could not get rice in the village.

However there was an additional factor that affected Government's view of Windsor Forest during 1972/73, and that was that Seeram had been accepted as a parliamentary candidate, although this was not known until just before the election. At a time when some of the Indians who were willing to become Government supporters and office

holders were of dubious capability and morality (as was revealed in the celebrated trial of a village Chairman from the Corantyne for murder at this time) Seeram must have looked an attractive proposition. For apart from being Indian he was educated, industrious and ambitious. Furthermore he had chosen to return to Guyana at a time when many with technical qualifications left the country for a more prosperous one just as soon as they could (however from the accounts of other students who knew him in London his academic career there was considerably more suspect than he would have people believe). Nevertheless his performance since his return had been impressive and he had greatly helped his father keep the Local Authority going.

When the elections were finally held in 1973 Ram was also a candidate, though for the PPP, the first time that he had ever stood for public office on their ticket. Had the elections been 'free and fair' there is no doubt that Ram would have been elected, for not only did he have the appeal of the PPP ticket but he also had an enormous amount of local respect. Seeram and Nan, on the other hand lacked this, not being grass-roots politicians by nature. This was borne out in the workings of the CDC, when one of the main participants told me that Seeram was often not recognised by the residents and did not perform well in this kind of situation, leaving others to do the main persuading. Conversely on the few occasions on which Nan accompanied the collection parties he was too easily recognised by the villagers and caused so much controversy that the others soon took to not telling him when they were going collecting.

However the 1973 elections were not 'free and fair', with the

universal belief that they were heavily rigged. This is made abundantly clear in the forceful but judicious statement by Smith that:

"During five months spent in Guyana in 1975 I met no one who believed that the elections of 1973 were fair; in the African villages the supporters of the People's National Congress boasted openly of the manner in which they were able to register multiple votes, to vote for people who had been long dead, and of how they had coerced East Indians living in the community into voting for the PNC. In the Indian villages everyone had stories of how ballot boxes were removed by the army, opened, and stuffed with substitute votes. Whatever the truth of the matter, the fact is that the 1973 elections have put the PNC leaders in a position where they can claim formal legitimacy for whatever policies they wish to introduce."

(R.T.Smith 1976:219)

The elections produced a substantial PNC majority almost everywhere, even in areas known to be solidly PPP, and observers in the Windsor Forest area were convinced that the official outcome bore no relation to the numbers who voted or their known political allegiance. (Information about this was provided by correspondence, since I had left Guyana by then. Further information was collected during a brief visit to the country in 1975).

Under the rather strange system imposed by Sandys in the 1960s each party's votes from the whole country are pooled and a certain number of seats in the National Assembly allocated as a result. The party then nominates these from a list prepared in advance of the election. Thus in many ways the whole country is one constituency and in the local area people are not voting for their local representative, for indeed there is no guarantee that they will in fact be allocated one from the parties concerned. However, even allowing for the disproportionately low poll registered for the PPP it is very likely that Ram would still have been allocated one of their seats, but this

did not happen for the PPP boycotted the National Assembly in protest at the electoral fraud that they believed had been perpetrated on them.

On the other hand Seeram did become an MP, and even a Parliamentary Secretary. Furthermore he was attached to the Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation, thus taking the post previously held by the MP from the West Bank. His Minister was Hamilton Greene, the most powerful man in the Government after Burnham, and the man who opened the Community Centre in Windsor Forest in 1973.

Seeram was thus in a very powerful position and able to distribute considerable amounts of patronage. This was very apparent during my brief return visit in 1975, when several of Seeram's acolytes from the CDC days now had lucrative Government positions, including the carpenter who had built the Community Centre who was now Technical Director of Community Development Projects for West Demerara.

The CDC was still active and about to wall in the bottom flat of the Community Centre as a kindergarten for pre-school children in the village. There were already two of these running privately, but the new one was designed to be better equipped and staffed by certificated teachers. The CDC had also managed to get the water supply improved to part of the village.

The Local Authority too was continuing to grow and was about to start the construction of its own purpose-built office next to the Community Centre, which had been built just across the railway from

the station (about to close) and on the edge of the open field used for official cricket matches. It now had an annual income of \$74,257 and was about to take out a loan of \$40,000 to buy its own excavator/bulldozer. It was also planning the installation of street lights and was still hoping to tarmac the streets.

The Rate Payers were heard of no more. Henry was now a firm PNC man, Roop was busy trying to make his rice land pay and Ram was making plans to go to Canada where he had family settled. He claimed that he would never completely leave Guyana, but he is unlikely to contest the local political system any more. For when the PPP promised 'critical support' of the PNC's new-found socialism in 1975 and took up their seats in the Assembly, Ram was not one of their chosen number. It looked as if the PNC victory in Windsor Forest was complete.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

This appears to be so even when we consider the fact that the political contest at the village level is not conducted solely through the Local Authority and official bodies such as the CDC. Despres (1967) has shown how the voluntary organisations of Guyana have been permeated by political allegiances, and much of the national political struggle concerns control of these bodies. During my fieldwork there were long and bitter wrangles between the PNC and PPP factions seeking control of the Sid'r Islamic Anjuman the national organisation for orthodox Muslims, and this was heavily featured in the press.

To a certain extent this kind of thing also happens at the local level, with party candidates contesting elections for organisations such as the Rice Producers Association in the past. However things

tend to be more personal and factional, with membership and control of organisations in the village fought over and coveted. One of the central organisations used for this purpose was the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), since this affected almost every house in the area. There had long been a history of community aid to the school, in terms of helping to expand and maintain the buildings. This was particularly relevant in this case since the school officially was still under the control of the Church, which continued to have responsibility for the fabric of the buildings.

For a long time Ram had been Chairman of the PTA and had organised affairs in his usual style, which entailed sporadically collecting money and pursuing a needed project. In 1972 the Local Authority/CDC faction challenged the old guard for control of the PTA and won. Munir became President, despite the fact that he had no children at the school, his wife having recently given birth to their only child after seventeen miscarriages. The Secretary was to be Nan, all of whose children were grown up and married. The Organising Secretary was Seeram, whose children were too young to attend school and the Treasurer was Aziz, another man whose children had all left school. Of the remaining seven Committee members five were either Councillors or CDC members.

Thus the PTA was controlled by people whose interests were less in the welfare of their children than in the way in which the organisation could serve as a platform for the projection of certain ideas and activities into the community generally. This was indicated by the way in which the PTA began to feature in the 'Journal', the duplicated newsheet put out periodically by the CDC as a means of

informing the village of its activities. Six issues were released in 1972/73 and the one for January 1973 notes:

"Following the assent of the President of the PTA on the 21st day of November 1972, the Association is now governed by a set of rules. This is the first time in history that the PTA is governed by a CONSTITUTION. A single copy of the PTA Constitution is available free of charge to Financial [i.e. paid up] Members of the Association."

(CDC Journal Vol 1 No 6 January 1973)

This was an obvious shaft aimed at Ram and the old guard, as was the item that had appeared in a previous issue:

"The fencing of the St Anthony's Anglican Senior School compound, which was started by the old PTA and left unfinished and also done contrary to Government specifications was completely demolished and resited by the newly elected PTA under the chairmanship of Mr. Abdul Munir Khan. By skilful representations by the new Executives, Mr. Mohamed Nazim, Senior Building Overseer M.W. & C., supplied the chain link fencing and the Teachers of the school are donating a gate for the compound. The gate is being built by Mr. Rajkumar Manadoo, Main Street, Windsor Forest, WCD, free of charge."

(CDC Journal Vol 1 No 5 October 1972)

Here again we have the impression of the 'new men' being technically competent as well as politically sophisticated and so speedily achieving what the old guard had fumbled over for so long. This effect was heightened even more by the fact that at an early, and well attended, CDC meeting Ram had suggested the fencing of the school compound as a possible CDC project because the PTA (under his control) had been unable to complete it. Now the new PTA had done the job properly in record time.

These Journal entries continued to create the same impression of dynamism in all affairs by chronicling such items as the purchase of a special rubber stamp, paid for by Munir and Seeram, the donation of a

tap by a PTA (and CDC) member and his installation of this with another PTA/CDC member to provide drinking water for pupils in the school yard, as well as the intention of the PTA to paint part of the Junior School as part of a '1973 Republic Anniversary Project'.

Seeram also tried a similar strategy in another field, that of the youth organisations. In 1957 the Arya Samaj had been visited by Usher Bode, a missionary from India who had preached the virtues of a progressive youth movement. As a result of this the Arya Virdal was founded and had an enthusiastic following. However as usually happens with voluntary organisations in Windsor Forest it petered out and was considered to be 'sleeping'. Thereafter most of the youth's activities continued to focus upon the cricket clubs and dominoes teams that traditionally provided recreation in the village. There were periodic attempts to restart the Virdal, but none came to fruition.

In 1962/3 it was decided to change the name of the Virdal to the Windsor Forest Youth Organisation and to admit youths of other religious persuasions. This too was successful for a while, and Seeram was active at this stage. However this too declined and in 1966 a new body, the Aryan Youth Organisation was formed. This concentrated on secondary school boys and used to meet in the Arya Samaj school building. In 1970 they decided to take over the bottom flat of the Samaj's building that had previously been used by the Windsor Forest Youth Organisation (WFYO) since, inevitably, the latter seemed to be 'sleeping'. Nevertheless the WFYO claimed to still be active, though its representatives did not attend a proposed joint meeting and it showed no other signs of life.

With the return of Seeram to the village in 1971 he decided to re-activate the WFYO and set about holding elections to the committee in 1972. These were not publicised and most people concerned in this area knew nothing about them. Furthermore most of the committee members seemed to be men of the same age as himself who had been active a decade earlier, and several were acolytes who later became active with him in the CDC. The WFYO now demanded access to the bottom flat of the Samaj building, on the grounds that the Organisation had paid for the walling-in of the bottom flat and also owned the furniture within. Thus he and three followers, all clerical employees in their twenties and all members of the CDC, went to the Aryan priest and demanded access to the building. He and Seeram were already on very bad terms, largely because of Seeram's open contempt for the priest's lack of formal education and supposed low caste background. Mahadeo, the priest, refused access and a row developed. Following this Seeram and his friends gained access to the building and threw out all the Samaj's goods from the bottom flat.

Later in the week, after the midweek Hawan ceremony several senior members of the Samaj went to the church building and reversed the process, replacing the Samaj's goods and throwing out those of the WFYO. After this Mahadeo the priest called a meeting of the Samaj's executive to try to resolve the matter, but this was not successful.

During the meeting, at about 9.30 pm, the police arrived with several of Seeram's supporters to investigate a breaking and entry to WFYO property and to arrest the Aryan priest and several of the Aryan Youth Organisation leaders. An angry body of senior Samaj members went to the police station some miles away in a hire car where Ram, as

President of the Sama j, was able to produce the lease for the building and establish their right to be there. Statements were made and all left, after the Station Sergeant had admitted that the complaint had been made by Seeram.

There things rested for a while. The charges against Mahadeo, the Aryan priest, were dropped and the two organisations held a wary truce which had not broken by the time I left the village shortly after. Seeram had not won this battle as he had won the others, though he did have a body of support on the committee of the WFYO, whose existence was also publicised in the CDC Journal.

By seeking to move into the religious sphere Seeram was entering an area where his resources were not as great as they were elsewhere. The Sama j had a long history of factious argument and dispute, in which Nan, Seeram's father, had played a role. He and Ram had also fought for office on the sect's national body, the American Aryan League. Although both had won positions at different times, at the local level Ram was dominant, having been President of the Sama j for some time. Attending religious functions was one of his main 'pastoral' political duties and he had devoted a good deal of time and energy to the affairs of the Sama j. Although not everyone agreed with him nobody doubted his sincerity and dedication.

Thus in seeking to move against Ram in this area Seeram was taking the risk of attacking him where he was most secure, and there was far more support in the Sama j for Ram than for Seeram. Furthermore people were generally satisfied with Mahadeo as a priest since he was devout and industrious with apparently no social or political ambitions. By

attacking him Seeram was again going against the tide of opinion, and to have engineered his arrest was seen by many as unforgivable. Furthermore it was an indication of Seeram's lack of political flair that he could not see that by criticising Mahadeo so vehemently he was also criticising the members of the Sama who had elected him under the sect's democratic organisation and who continued to support him by attending his services. Here the bureaucratic strengths that had brought so much success to Seeram in the CDC were a liability and his lack of personal empathy was no match for Ram's history of support and esteem. Having had his nose blooded over the WFYO affair he decided to retreat for a while.

At first Ram and Seeram appear to operate with very different political styles. Ram's was based on personal contact, a history of dedication, and a continual pervasive presence, always 'moving with the people'. On the other hand Seeram was aloof, technocratic, autocratic and even until the time of his election to the National Assembly, actually unknown to many of the less active members of the community. Their styles can be opposed:

<u>RAM</u>	<u>SEERAM</u>
<u>Gemeinschaft</u>	<u>Gesellschaft</u>
charisma	bureaucracy
affective	instrumental
reputation	respectability

However both used similar mechanisms for the prosecution of their political interests - the control of formal organisations. The ability of offices in formal voluntary organisations to confer status

has long been recognised (Little 1965) and this process has been a feature of Windsor Forest for some time too. In the 1950s Smith noted that there were 24 organisations within the village with 300 offices (Jayawardena 1963:130).

Offices in such organisations offer eminence, an opportunity to address the membership at gatherings as well as bringing rewards in the community's internal status system. However most crucial are those organisations that give contact with external bodies and power sources. The least significant were those that contacted only other voluntary organisations, such as the American Aryan League or the County Cricket Board of Control. The Parent Teachers Association, by offering negotiations with the educational administration, was more significant, whereas the WFYO, being internal, was not.

However the most significant were those that dealt directly with Government and could influence the flow of resources, either material or political, into the community. Hence in the old days it was the Settlers' Committee that offered most in this direction, and although Ram spent most of his time talking about the internal benefits they could bring by their efforts, the most significant aspect was their ability to mobilise external Government resources to these internal needs. As we have seen the Settlers' Committee was not very successful at this.

The most successful body in this area was, of course, the CDC, which showed itself to be the most effective organisation in dealing with Government and obtaining resources. It was Seeram's great achievement to unlock this flow of tangible benefits and in turn the basis for his

political message that only educated bureaucrats like himself and his followers could guarantee such a response. In this respect he was fulfilling the role of the 'broker' able to mediate between the external power source and the local political system, as described by Bailey (1969). True to Bailey's specification he also obtained his rewards from both parties, though was not necessarily liked by either.

This also represented one of the great changes from the 1950s to the 1970s. For in the earlier time the village was alive with factions fighting and arguing over religion, whereas in the 1970 the focus had switched to politics. This was not only because of the 'political' issues of the 1970s - the dominance of the PNC, the 'paramountcy of the party' - for two decades previously there had been equally momentous issues to discuss as political activity became more dynamic and the end of colonialism came into view. Rather in the 1950s religion offered the most effective contact with resource systems external to the village, whereas in the 1970s it had become Government that fulfilled this role.

By now the imminence of Government was very apparent, not only in the political issues but also in almost all areas of agriculture too, from the prices paid for rice to the cost of inputs such as fertiliser, fuel oil and tractors. Then there was the problem of jobs for the labour displaced from the rice fields by mechanisation, and finally the ability to provide the communal benefits that the village wanted and which it had for so long been without.

Although the village owed its creation to Government and its continued existence as an agricultural community had always depended

on Government and the latter's willingness to continue to operate the lease system at a loss, the village was by the 1970s, nevertheless, very much more closely tied to and dependent on Government than it had ever been. This was a new dimension of dependency, and those who could show themselves to be most effective in exploiting it had the most power.

THE HECHTER MODEL

Mention was made in Chapter 1 of the Hechter model of 'internal colonialism' which predicts that in a situation like that of Guyana the alienated political 'periphery' will increase its sense of ethnic solidarity and exert pressure on the dominant 'core' for improved recognition. In the case of Guyana the 'periphery' translates as the Indian section of the population and the 'core' becomes the African and allied ethnic groups. This is largely because of both the political dominance of the latter through the rule of the PNC and the extent to which they were the heirs of the colonial masters, socially, politically and administratively.

The expression of ethnic solidarity as a means of asserting the worth of one's ethnic group is an activity that has a long tradition in Guyana and has been commented on before (R.T.Smith 1962:140; 1966;54). Smith's analysis is very similar to that of Hechter and he too stresses the way in which the assertion of identity can be perceived as a secessionist tendency, as the Robertson Commission felt in 1954 (Cmd. 9274, 1954).

In the present situation examples of this process of cultural assertion can still be found. One of the organisations that was most

active in prosecuting this level of activity was the Mahatma Gandhi Youth Organisation which was a body of mainly professional Indians based in Georgetown that ran a cultural centre and a private secondary school which was very popular. The MGYO took it on itself to assert the interests of the Indian section of the population and its Secretary, Dr. Balwant Singh, who was the Government's Chief Bacteriologist, was frequently in the newspapers offering the Indian point of view.

This was often critical of Government, and relations between the two became very strained over the issue of the National Cultural Centre. Some years before a Government committee, under the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Mr. Sase Narain, had considered what to do with the remains of the fund originally set up to repatriate Indians to India, the Indian Immigration Fund. Since there were virtually no remaining eligible Indians there was a problem of what to do with the fund. The Committee had recommended setting up several Indian Cultural Centres throughout the country, though nothing had been done about this. In 1972 Guyana was to host CARIFESTA, the first Caribbean Festival of Creative Arts and the Government wanted to build a National Cultural Centre for the Festival, to be partly financed by the remains of the Immigration Fund.

Indian organisations protested that this was an abuse of the fund and were not mollified by the idea that all sections of the society would have a share in the National Centre. The MGYO was prominent in this battle, which raged acrimoniously in the press for months. The issue became a test-case of PNC willingness to accommodate to Indian views, and in the heat of the debate there were some harsh things said

about Indian views of 'steel band culture' and the low moral and intellectual tone of much of what could be expected to be performed during the Festival and after. The Government remained firm and the money went to the Centre, which in the event was not finished in time.

Not surprisingly this left a considerable amount of bad feeling in the Indian organisations, and largely as a result of this they decided to come together to form an umbrella organisation, the Guyana Council of Indian Organisations. This body proceeded to hold a series of rallies at which issues arising from the Cultural Centre debacle were discussed. The political tone of these became more marked, partly because it became known that some of the people involved were from the Liberator group. This was a group of Indian doctors and lawyers who had taken on the Government's strict pamphletting laws by producing a satirical newspaper called the Liberator whose registered office was one of the most prestigious private hospitals controlled by the leaders and which was given away free to get round the laws on the sale of subversive literature. This circulated widely and its blend of jokes, scandal and serious exposure was greatly welcomed in many areas.

With this political leaven the GCIO decided to celebrate 'Indian Immigration Day', the anniversary of the arrival of the first Indians in Guyana. There was considerable encouragement for communities and organisations to celebrate this in their own way, and though there was much talk of the idea, nothing was done in Windsor Forest. However a gala was staged in Georgetown at the MGYO school and there were numerous speeches from Indian politicians and academics. This was one of the largest gatherings of Indians that had met for an expression of

ethnic solidarity for some time and there were many critical assessments of the progress that Indians had (or had not) made since their ancestors first arrived. The culmination was the demand that the Government should create another public holiday, to be called 'Indian Immigration Day'. This the Government refused to do, but the call nevertheless had the effect of concentrating Indian identity on a unifying symbol and stressing the way in which the Government was not catering to the needs and identity of the Indians.

The other aspect of the Hechter model is that the political 'core' will seek to head off these threats by redressive and pre-emptive action. It has long been a characteristic of political parties in Guyana that they seek to gain control of ethnic organisations to exert pressure on the Government and also to win the allegiance of the members of the organisations concerned, thus adding to their vote. In part this is also derived from the colonial/creole political system whereby the separate ethnic groups were 'represented' to the Government as the final arbitrator by formal organisations. Thus to be able to control one of these mouthpieces for a 'legitimate' sectional interest was a major means of having the views of one's party pressed on Government. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, this level of institutional and organisational analysis is characteristic of Despres's early work, and though it is applicable to the formally organised political sphere, it does not translate well into the informal sphere, especially at the local level.

Nevertheless the PNC government continued to seek for control of national Indian organisations. During the time of my fieldwork the most striking example of this was the battle over the control of the

Sid'r Islamic Anjuman, the national co-ordinating body for all orthodox Muslims. This had been controlled for some time by a PPP-oriented faction and the Annual General Meeting was widely expected to see a bid on the part of known PNC supporters to take over control.

The manoeuvrings before the meeting were considerable and there were a number of High Court injunctions used to affect the outcome. The elections were very confused and unruly, which produced more court injunctions, which resulted in them being held again. There were several attempts at holding them, with disagreements amongst the factions as to who had the right to call meetings and the such like. The meetings were held in out of the way places at very strange times and on numerous occasions non-government supporters found it very hard to get there, with the public transport service suddenly failing and the police having to set up road blocks for suspected criminals, all of which greatly delayed travel.

In such a situation one could ask why the PNC, as firmly ruling party, would want to go to such lengths to gain control of an organisation that had little in the way of tangible resources. The answer, I believe, is in the realm of legitimation. Being able to make pro-government statements through one of the respected and 'legitimate' Indian organisations offered the PNC an opportunity to try to dampen down the pressures for Indian assertiveness and reduce the sense of Indian ethnic isolation.

In the village setting we have seen the same kinds of processes at work, with the Local Authority and the Community Development Committee

being used as a means of expanding Government patronage into the disaffected 'peripheral' Indian community. These would therefore seem to constitute further evidence of the utility of the Hechter model for predicting patterns of ethnic identity and assertion in societies such as Guyana.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this Chapter we have seen the changes in the relationship which the village has with Government, particularly the withdrawal of central administration and the replacement of this with a Local Authority. In many ways this change can be seen not only as sensible, but also as inevitable. The facilities provided by the Lands & Mines Department, like those provided by the Settlers' Committee, were rudimentary. Furthermore, they were not what the villagers wanted, as they never ceased to make clear. The only problem was who was to pay for the new facilities, and it was the issue of taxation, in the form of rates, that lay at the heart of the opposition to a Local Authority. Both the colonial and PPP administrations had effectively side-stepped this issue by refusing to face up to the residents and their wrath following the creation of a Local Authority. The colonial administration had, on numerous occasions in the past, shown itself to be vulnerable to mass appeals from settlers over their 'rights'. Similarly, the PPP was anxious not to alienate its Indian supporters, and so avoided the issue of the Local Authority in the face of village opposition.

On the other hand the PNC had no qualms about further antagonising its known political opponents by making this unpopular move. For in addition to improving the effectiveness of administration in the area,

the Local Authority would ultimately aid the extension of Government, and party, penetration into a potentially troublesome area. National political activity tends to confirm the Hechter model of ethnic politics, and so as the 'peripheral' Indian section articulated their disaffection there was a continued risk that the communal violence of the 1960s would return, and so to this extent the PNC could not afford to allow Indians to become too alienated. Distinctive Indian villages such as Windsor Forest, with their ethnic solidarity and PPP traditions, would make obvious targets for close attention. This is indeed what happened, as the Chapter has shown.

The Local Authority was the most important strand in this strategy, as well as offering the best long-term results. However, there were other strands, such as the Community Development Committee and the Parent/Teacher Association. In this we see the old tradition of Guyanese politics of using formal organisations as a base for political action, as occurred at the national level with the struggle for control of the Muslim Anjuman. The same features can also be seen in the way in which Seeram sought to gain control of the Aryan Youth Organisation.

But there are also important differences in these activities. Seeram had succeeded in establishing the capability of the 'new men' of the village, the educated youth, who hitherto had not featured in the community's political life. Not only had he shown how they were able to mount successful campaigns, such as that for the restoration of the Health Centre, but had also demonstrated their ability to act as brokers in dealing with central Government. Thus in one move he had, in a very short time, brought together the key elements in the

village's new environment: education, jobs and Government. Furthermore, by establishing himself as an intermediary between the village and the ruling party, as well as being the most effective conduit for financial assistance that the village had produced, he was also able to assist his father in establishing the credibility of the Local Authority as a another manifesation of Government assistance. The final element needed for the successful penetration of the PNC into the village was the creation of jobs, and once he had been elected to Parliament, these too followed.

These attempts to strike at the basis of ethnic particularism and solidarity not only help to confirm the Hechter model, but also point to a strategy of increasing efforts on the part of the PNC to incorporate all elements of the society directly under its control. Such a policy would radically alter the traditional role and significance of ethnicity in Guyana, and it is in relation to such a tendency that the political events in Windsor Forest must be seen. An attempt at such an analysis will be made in the concluding Chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

In this concluding Chapter I wish to relate the body of data presented in Chapters 2-7 to the five questions that were specified in Chapter 1, and to discuss the implications of my findings for anthropological theories of social change. The questions which the research set out to examine were:

- 1) Why had Smith's prediction of a form of 'agricultural involution' as a result of his 1956 study not been borne out?
- 2) Given the amount of technological innovation and change that had taken place in the village since Smith's study, was there any benefit in trying to see the decision making associated with this in a series of encapsulating contexts?
- 3) Was there any evidence from the political experience of the village to support a prediction based on Hechter's model of 'internal colonialism' and the associated political ethnicity?
- 4) In view of the degree of change in the economic activities of members of the community, how effective was a 'modernisation' approach to the analysis of this?
- 5) What implications do the the economic and social changes experienced in Windsor Forest have for the study of ethnicity in Guyana?

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Question 1:

Why had Smith's prediction of a form of 'agricultural involution' as a result of his 1956 study not been borne out?

At the local level the village of Windsor Forest exemplified the 'ecological niche' approach taken by Despres (1969). For not only was it a case of an Indian rural community, but it was also an extreme case of the characteristics associated with such communities. It is striking that, as noted in Chapters 2 & 3, from the earliest times there was never any difficulty in finding settlers for the scheme and the cultivation lands were always fully let. This would seem to indicate that not only did the arrangements for the leases suit the needs of the farmers of the early times - who still faced the daunting task of breaking the fields for rice cultivation - but also in later years it came to be realised what good quality facilities were being provided and at what advantageous rates. Thus the combination of good facilities and cheap leases would seem to be an extremely favourable combination for the farmers of the area.

It is therefore not surprising that the settlers should seek to exploit the potential of this form of 'ecological niche' to the full, as they did. This led to the emergence of the traditional system of production based on the cultivation of small acreages using bulls and family labour. The land was fertile and the good drainage and irrigation facilities allowed the maximum to be obtained from it in terms of two crops per year, which were planted from the earliest times. This in turn produced an output which, according to elderly informants, did not diminish over approximately fifty years, even without any noticable amount of fertilisation. Thus the farmers became as prosperous as the size of their enterprises permitted, as is

brought out in Huggins's survey of 1938, where he found that the Vreed en Hoop farmers were more prosperous only because of their ability to engage in the lucrative Georgetown milk trade (Huggins 1941).

The culmination of this process was the situation found by Smith in 1956. There the traditional system of production had been pushed as far as it could go, with all available land in the immediate area having been pressed into service. The result was that the local farmers were thought of by the rice industry officials as being very 'professional' and enjoyed a considerable reputation locally for their dedication to rice cultivation. However the population of the village, like that of most other Indian communities, was booming, due largely to improved public health measures such as the eradication of malaria from the coastal area. It was this combination of it being extremely unlikely that there would be any increase in rice output, combined with the pressures of an expanding population that led Smith to his gloomy prognostications about the future prospects for the community (1957:519).

"For the past few years prosperity has been increasing for Windsor Forest rice farmers. Rising prices for rice, coupled with an increase in the area under cultivation, particularly on private estates lower down the coast, has enabled incomes to keep up with, and slightly overtake, a rising cost-of-living and a rapidly increasing population. The outlook for the future is not so encouraging. It does not appear that the upward trend in prices is likely to continue at its past rate, and there is no indication of a rapid expansion, either in the area of land under cultivation or in any other sector of the economy. Even if it were possible to bring about significant increases in yields per acre, it is clear that a large proportion of the next generation of adults will either have to turn to some crop which gives a higher return from a smaller area of land, or leave the district, or endure a sharp drop in the present standard of living. From the figures given in this paper one can see that such a drop must result in real hardship."

(R.T.Smith 1957, p. 519)

The underlying assumption of course, was that the Indians would remain within their ecological niche. Given the pattern of production and the traditions of the community this seemed a reasonable projection, and indeed the factor that made the dramatic change in the situation came from outside the community.

However the crisis did not come as expected, and the salvation was urban work, as discussed in Chapter 6. This in turn raises the question of why Smith did not mention this as a possible solution. The main reason is that, at the time he was writing, the solution simply did not exist, and in the creation of the possibility of such a solution the role of Government is crucial. For during the late 1950s and the 1960s the number of government jobs increased greatly as more and more responsibilities were taken on. At the local level the process started with the hiring of Windsor Forest men by the Rice Marketing Board (RMB), and they are the longest serving workers in the village. Now the situation is that 53% of full-time male employees work for the Government or government agencies.

The answer to the first research question must be that the village was fortunate to be sited within distance of Georgetown, so that the residents were able to take advantage of the expanding urban employment sector, and thereby deflect the threat of agricultural involution foreseen by Smith in 1956.

Question 2:

Given the amount of technological innovation and change that had taken place in the village since Smith's study, was there any benefit in trying to see the decision-making associated with this in a series of encapsulating contexts?

As has already been discussed in Chapter 5, the factor that altered the traditional pattern of rice cultivation in the village was the advent of mechanisation, even though its effects went far beyond what appears to have been contemplated at its introduction. During the time of Smith's study mechanised cultivation was not unknown in the village, since there were already seven tractors there. Nevertheless Smith did not expect them to be a solution to the farmers' problems, since they were too expensive to be cost-effective and he did not see them increasing greatly in number. Why, then, did the change take place, with a tenfold increase in the number of tractors in little over ten years and an almost total move to mechanised cultivation?

The crucial factor was the Government. For it was they, through the Development Plan, who offered 'soft' loans at low interest rates, who through the RMB guaranteed loans for equipment, who provided duty-free petrol and who paid advantageous prices for rice. The impetus for the increase in the level of mechanisation was in part derived from the need to expand production to take advantage of the new protected market in the Caribbean.

However the process of mechanisation also had some unexpected consequences. Once the move really got under way it had a 'band-wagon' effect, in that once the timetable of ploughing, irrigating and reaping was geared to mechanised cultivation the farmer working to the traditional system would have been left hopelessly behind in the rush to get the padi to the mill before the rains came. When the move was

really complete a number of other effects began to be seen. The women who were no longer required to work in the fields could be absorbed into the domestic world and occupied there, but the young men who had normally spent much of their time helping their fathers on the family farm were now displaced by mechanisation, for they simply were not needed. With a population that was still shooting up this was a problem that was going to continue to grow.

The mid 1960s also saw the downfall of the PPP government and the end of the high level of support for the rice industry, which in turn brought other problems. The most serious was the fundamentally uneconomic nature of the mechanisation process. This had merely been grafted on to the existing pattern of family farms that had emerged under the traditional pattern of cultivation, with the tractor simply being used as a mechanical bull. The net result was that the village was heavily over-supplied with tractors. Similarly the land holding pattern had not been rationalised, so that tractors were not working economic acreages, nor were they working those they did in the most efficient way. The advantages of the ecological niche had gone: they worked for the traditional system of production, but the community had failed to translate these into a comparable set of advantageous factors under the regime of mechanised cultivation. It seemed as if Smith's prognostication was about to come true with a vengeance.

As we have seen this prognostication did not come to pass as Smith had expected, due to the growth of urban employment. Nevertheless, this was an unplanned and largely fortuitous set of circumstances, with no prior intimation of the likely outcome. At the same time the village would have been in dire economic straits without this

development, for all the indications are that what Smith had forecast would have come true without this new development.

It therefore seems to me that it is impossible to attempt to examine local changes without examining the context in which the decisions were made by local farmers to embark on a process of innovation. It is also important for this context to be defined as widely as possible. Thus in the situation of Windsor Forest it is not only feasible, but also desirable, to see the decision making by farmers in a local, national and international context.

At the local level the technological innovations of machine ploughing and combine harvesting not only offered attractions for farmers in terms of the extent to which they reduced the sheer arduousness of farming, but also the way in which these innovations so altered the speed at which the various stages of cultivation were carried out as effectively to establish a new timetable for them. This in turn constrained farmers to convert to it in order to be able to get their padi to the mill in reasonable time to stand a chance of having it milled and shipped to the RMB before the crop season ended. Thus this whole process increased the pressure to move over to mechanised cultivation.

At the national level there is a good deal of evidence to show the forms of inducements that were offered to farmers to encourage them to move over to the new methods, such as subsidised fuel, 'soft' loans and the hire of specialised equipment like sprays. At the same time there were the pressures from the political system not only to provide activities for the growing population, supplemented as it was by the

displacement of labour from the sugar industry, but also to do something to reward the political supporters of the PPP.

Another factor of relevance is the generally dependent relationship which rice farmers have with the RMB, which is not only the main supplier of seeds, fertiliser, weedicides and other inputs, but also the provider of financial support and ultimately the paymaster of all as the sole grading and purchasing authority. As far as Windsor Forest is concerned there was the additional factor of the special relationship of dependency that the village had in relation to Government, with its heavy reliance on the latter's support of the system of drainage and irrigation facilities.

Even the national level decisions have to be seen in a wider context, for the PPP government was constrained and encouraged in certain directions by the British government as colonial masters. Thus the expansion of the rice industry occurred because of an executive decision on the part of the British colonial authorities that the West Indian market would be the protected preserve of Guyana. Furthermore, the emphasis on the expansion of the rice industry that was to be found in the PPP Development Plan was in large part because the British government had made it plain that there simply was not any more development finance available for Guyana, and hence more expensive projects could not be contemplated (Berrill 1961). Similarly the world-level political activities of the super-powers intervened, as when the lucrative Cuban market opened in pursuit of the socialist orientation of the Jagan government, and closed just as quickly with Jagan's fall and the re-emergence of American interests.

Thus in the case of the move to mechanised cultivation it is possible to see a chain of connected interests and pressures stretching from the centre of colonial power in Whitehall down to the administration in Georgetown and ultimately to the villagers in Windsor Forest. I do not consider it fanciful to see these elements connected in this way, and I feel it is important to our understanding of the innovations that were made to see the chain of connecting influences. In this case I also feel that the chain of dependency can be seen as stretching from the colonial capital, Georgetown, to the rural areas, creating an economic, administrative and political environment in which the villagers made their decisions. Some of these can now be seen not to have been very good ones, though they doubtless looked better at the time. Yet the village and the country has to continue to live with the consequences of these decisions even though the interests that might have initiated them have left the scene. This seems to me yet another indication of the benefits to be gained from examining the processes of decision making in as wide a context as possible.

Thus I conclude that there are indeed considerable benefits to be gained by an anthropological analysis of decision making, in situations of innovation and change, which takes into account the higher-level structures that constrain the decisions that are made.

Question 3:

Was there any evidence from the political experience of the village to support a prediction based on Hechter's model of 'internal colonialism' and the associated political ethnicity?

The Hechter thesis of 'internal colonialism' and its translation into the Guyanese context was introduced in Chapter 1 and the evidence discussed in Chapter 7. From this model we would expect to find the PNC, as the creole 'core', seeking to deflect the pressures of ethnic solidarity and political disaffection exerted by the relatively disadvantaged Indian 'periphery'. Evidence for both of these processes was mentioned in Chapter 7, though here I would stress two elements.

At the time of the fieldwork the traditional system of conducting ethnic politics from a base in an ethnic organisation was still apparent, for there was a very protracted battle between two factions representing the two major parties for control of the executive of the Sad'r Islamic Anjuman, the national Muslim body. From the press accounts of the wrangles the PNC faction went to considerable lengths to obtain control of this body. However, this would then give them control of one of the 'legitimate' organisations that had traditionally been seen as speaking for a major part of the Indian cultural section. The efforts to gain control of this organisation can be seen as a hang-over from the colonial regime, when the ethnic compartmentalisation of the population was the norm, with each ethnic category being represented by a series of recognised organisations.

Similarly, the traditional role of Indian organisations in national ethnic debate can be seen to be continuing, with an organisation formed specifically for the purpose, the Guyana Council of Indian

Organisations. As was mentioned in Chapter 7, this body was formed out of the protest over the Government's proposal to use funds earmarked for Indian cultural centres for a national cultural centre instead. It further suggested that a public holiday, to be called Indian Immigration Day, should be instituted to commemorate the arrival of the first Indian immigrants to the country. This movement represented the greatest mobilisation of Indian pressure, outside the formal political parties, that had been seen for some considerable time. Both these instances are examples of the kind of political activity that the Hechter model predicts.

At the village level this process is manifest in the kinds of events described in Chapter 7. The creation of the Local Authority and the deliberate channelling of funds into the village through official agencies such as that and the CDC is part of the same strategy to concentrate the power of patronage solely in the hands of government. This was, of course, resisted, as we saw with the Rate Payers, and by comments on the activities of government. For although the village did not actively participate in the national political system prior to 1973 (when Seeram and Ram stood for the National Assembly), the residents, with their tradition of PPP support, represented a potential nucleus of ethnic disaffection. Thus the PNC would, according to the Hechter model, seek to undermine this threat, as we have seen they did indeed do.

However, the PNC were not just engaged in a Guyanese version of the traditional political game of 'musical chairs' and trying to keep their opponents out of power. They were not concerned to play according to the system: they were intent on changing the system. The

modification of the electoral procedures, the movement to a Republic and ultimately the changing of the Constitution to create an executive Presidency, all served radically to alter the scope for political action outwith the PNC, and the process appears to be continuing. Thus it is common to hear people complaining, often bitterly, about the new turn of events, "everything gone down in politics", as it was often put. There is also resentment at the amount of patronage that government is able to offer in the realm of jobs, especially for the youths. But with the PNC's conversion to socialism and the nationalisation of all the main employers - including the fabled Bookers - this is a pattern that is not only likely to continue, but which also fits into the government's apparent overall strategy. However, this is something that the Hechter model does not effectively deal with: a situation where a ruling party tries to restrict the scope for the expression of political ethnicity to the extent that the PNC has done in Guyana.

Therefore, my conclusion with regard to the Hechter model must be that whilst it offers considerable predictive capability, there is the possibility that there will be situations with which it is not able to cope.

Question 4:

In view of the degree of change in the economic activities of members of the community, how effective was a 'modernisation' approach to the analysis of this?

The forms of innovation and change that have been described in this thesis are often thought of in terms of 'modernisation' as the

traditional system becomes modified, more sophisticated, more western. Most of the elements for such an analysis are to be found in the experience of Windsor Forest, the degree of technical innovation in the rice industry as it moved to mechanised cultivation; the displacement of labour that leads to a higher standard of living (in that women do not have to work in the fields any more); the freeing of this labour for other productive activities; the higher educational qualifications that village children now have and which allow them to enter into the prestigious urban employment market; the general move to urban work and experience.

In addition, there is a long history of the Indian cultural section adapting to the values of Guyanese 'creole' culture, and there is continuing pressure for this to continue. The education system is a powerful force for the inculcation of these values, as is indicated by the Government's introduction of new teaching material designed to heighten the pupils' sense of national pride in their history. Furthermore, the extent to which Indians now encourage all forms of educational opportunity for their children increases the degree of exposure to these effects. Smith too has commented on the degree to which Indians now depend on the educational system as a basis for their hopes for social mobility:

"Since mobility aspirations, and the desire for higher levels of living, are as great among Indians as among Africans, it is likely that Indians will rely more on the public educational system as the direct ladder into higher status employment."

(R.T.Smith 1971:420)

There are also the ever-present effects of the mass media, with commercial radio being especially influential, though newspapers also circulate widely. However it is the cinema, an immensely popular

activity in the country as a whole, that provides a major window on the outside world. People talk avidly about the latest film craze, young men act out the scenes and dances of popular films and model their appearance on that of the stars. Even though most villagers attend Indian films, the generally westernised appearance that is often portrayed in these means that this is what comes across when they are copied in the rural areas.

These are the kinds of factors and results that the modernisation theorists would see as a crucial indication of the move to a more 'modern' outlook. But what is significant in the case of Guyana is that these pressures and characteristics have been around for some time. As was mentioned earlier the economic motivation of the earliest settlers was thoroughly 'modern' and the westernising influence has been at work since the Indians first came to the country. Also Smith noticed the move to more creole values in fashion and appearance as more money became available (1964:319). These characteristics of the Indian cultural section, which had been heavily modified by the experience of the Plantation Society and the exposure to both colonialism and international capitalism for more than a century, have been neatly summarised by Cross when he says:

"The irony is that rural folk, usually able to comprehend metropolitan languages and well versed in Western life styles have accepted such values not as innovations but as extensions of their own culture. The Scottish crofter or the Irish peasant has more roots to lose than the average West Indian whose loss predates either his urban or rural existence."
(Cross 1979:152)

Here again, I feel, we have an indication of the shortcomings of the simple modernisation approach, for whilst the Indians were well aware of the more fashionable, western, urban styles they had little

opportunity to respond to them till the improved conditions of the 1950s made this possible. Similarly in the late 1960s with the move to urban work, particularly on the part of women and girls, there was a very rapid move to more 'appropriate' dress. Also, as the opportunity to gain clerical employment became available, both because the jobs became more common and because their education now made them qualified candidates, the young girls of the village showed themselves willing to rise to the challenge. Furthermore, parents were also willing to be persuaded to finance the necessary further training in secretarial schools.

The failure of modernisation theories is that they allocate too much significance to the values themselves and not enough to the context in which they operate. Thus one needs to see the process of social change in terms of the factors that make certain patterns of behaviour not only acceptable, but also possible. To my mind this means one has to examine the political and institutional pressures that are exerted on both individuals and communities.

Thus I feel that it is useful to see the pattern of farming that is practiced in Windsor Forest as part of the Indian ethnic identity. Indians have a view of land that is rather different to that of Africans, in that the former tend to see it more instrumentally and have none of the mystical notions about attachments to villages "where one's navel string is buried", as Smith reported for Africans (R.T.Smith 1964:316). On the other hand there are cultural constraints on Indians, in that many expressed to me the feeling that they 'ought' to own land, since it was an 'Indian' tradition to do so. In part this helps to account for the spread of different occupations

found amongst farmers, from labourers to shopkeepers, from civil servants to businessmen.

This in turn leads to a specific perception of agriculture, in that farmers feel that they 'know' rice and thus should stick to what they know best. This is reflected in the relative unwillingness of farmers to consider other forms of agricultural enterprise, even when these are shown to be profitable, and examples of this can be found in Windsor Forest.

Mention was made in Chapter 5 of the way in which farmers had shown little interest in ground provisions and other forms of vegetables, even though the cultivation of these was within the conventional knowledge of all farmers. Nevertheless, there was one farmer in the village who was very enthusiastic about this form of agriculture and planted four acres of ground provisions in the backdam. In addition there was the half of Nan's new co-operative farm land which was devoted to provisions and which was successful. Thus the villagers had ample indication that the growing of provisions was not only feasible but also profitable. Yet very few tried it and when I mentioned it in conversation farmers did not express any interest.

In Chapter 5 mention was also made of another example of the same kind of perception, the case of milk supply. As was discussed there, the village had received a good deal of support during the colonial period to help set up an efficient milk producing system in the communal pasture. At its peak in the 1950s this enabled more than 9,000 gallons to be shipped to the pasteurisation plant in Georgetown. Since then the system has collapsed and now no milk is sent to town, yet there still remains a national shortage of fresh milk. This kind

of perception was specifically noted by Dumont in his report on Guyanese agriculture:

"Guiana's peasant is first and foremost a crop grower, not a livestock farmer. Thus, as soon as a piece of land is sufficiently drained, he would never dream of establishing an improved pasture, but will immediately turn it into a paddy field. In doing so, he is only carrying on in a way the sugar plantation tradition, where the approach was in terms of exports and not of cattle for domestic consumption."

(Dumont 1963:15)

Modernisation theories assume that the process is a 'once-and-for-all' experience, and once people are shown the benefits of innovation and capital accumulation they will continue to pursue their economic interests in a 'modern' way. After that, according to this approach, all that are needed are procedures and inputs to 'improve' the output of the farmers' product. This is largely the strategy that has lain behind almost all of the official support for rice cultivation in Guyana, from colonial times to the present. The evidence from Windsor Forest, however, does not support such a view, for decisions are constrained by a variety of factors. Some of these are economic and financial, whereas others are political and cultural. Thus it is necessary to take into consideration the ethnic and political context in which decisions are made.

My conclusions concerning modernisation theories are that despite their 'commonsensical' attractiveness they nevertheless hide a series of assumptions and presuppositions that are not supported by field evidence. This makes them inappropriate for the analysis of complex situations of change such as that found in Guyana.

Question 5:

What implications do the economic and social changes experienced in Windsor Forest have for the study of ethnicity in Guyana?

In Chapter 1 there was a discussion of the evolution of the concept of ethnicity and its use in the analysis of Guyanese society, in which it was stressed that ethnicity must be seen flexibly. Thus ethnicity is not to be seen as a cultural 'survival' or 'core' of cultural characteristics preserved through the vicissitudes of the migration to the New World, but rather as something heavily modified by the experiences of the receiving society. The very noticeable cultural differences between the descendants of Indian immigrants in Surinam and Guyana are a sharp reminder that the process of migration alone cannot account for the forms of cultural characteristics exhibited by immigrant populations.

Thus in the Guyanese situation ethnicity is better seen as one of the important diacritica of social categories in the society, rich with layers of association and implications. Among the most crucial of these associated attributes are the closely related ones of economic specialisation and spatial distribution.

For, as Despres (1975), R.T. Smith (1970) and Singh (1972) have pointed out, the country has tended to be divided into areas of ethnic residence and economic specialisation - Barth and Despres's 'ecological niches'. Thus the Indian population has tended to be located in the rural areas, whereas the urban areas have traditionally been seen as the ecological niche of the African section of the population. Furthermore when the boundaries of these niches are crossed it is likely to lead to resistance to the perceived threat.

There is evidence that increasing movement by Indians into the urban areas and prestigious employment has been going on for some time and shows no sign of slowing down (International Commission of Jurists 1965; Graham & Gordon 1975). This competitive pressure on scarce resources is often seen as one of the major precipitating causes of the racial 'troubles' of the mid 1960s (Henfrey 1972; Cross 1978).

The implications of such an encroachment would appear to be severe for the system of ethnic balance. This in turn ensures that the issue of the relative position of the ethnic groups in the society and their access to its resources is very much alive. It is this situation of perceived ethnic threat and the attempt to mount a defence which puts ethnic identity at a premium for access to resources and jobs that Cross refers to as a situation of 'ethnic salience' (1978).

The relative allocation of resources between ethnic groups is an issue that has to be resolved at the highest political level. There the policy of the current regime appears to have been to down-grade the effectiveness of a number of the formal institutions that could serve to assist this process, such as the National Assembly, which tends to meet infrequently and to debate little. In addition the Assembly was boycotted for much of the early 1970s by the opposition, as a protest at the extent to which they felt they had been 'robbed' of the elections of 1973 by the widely-reported cases of ballot rigging. Similarly the Government has managed, at least in the eyes of a large section of the electorate, to have also down-graded the significance of elections as a result of this same manipulation of the voting procedures, with the result that the need for governments to satisfy their constituents and distribute rewards equitably to try to ensure re-election has been greatly eroded.

The net result of this process seems to be that the government has sought to draw into its own hands the right to arbitrate on all such matters and to eliminate alternative power sources within the society that could be used to exert pressure on them.

In one way this pattern is not so different, as far as Windsor Forest is concerned, in that it continues the situation of dependency on Government that has been a characteristic of this community since its foundation as a land settlement scheme in the early years of this century. From then the ecological niche that the settlers exploited was dependent on not only the willingness of Government to formalise the leases, but also to implement the obligation to maintain the drainage and irrigation system honourably. This it has done, but the settlers have also shown a ready willingness to defend their position when necessary.

The major difference about the present situation is that now the village is in an overtly 'political' decision-making environment. In the past the political success was to achieve the establishment of the settlement scheme and to preserve it by periodic demonstrations. For the remainder of the time the control of Windsor Forest, with the other West Demerara Estates, appeared to be seen as routine administration. Yet, however, they consumed a considerable amount of public resources and the apparently uncontentious nature of the administration of the Estates arose only because the colonial government chose not to question too closely the utility of maintaining the Estates in this way.

In large part this willingness to allocate such resources, pursued in the face of stiff opposition from the Financial Representatives as was shown in Chapter 2, evolved from the extent to which the colonial administration, both in Guyana and in London, was committed to the notion of settling an Indian peasantry. This category of European thought, reflected in innumerable references in official documents, is a further example of the way in which Guyanese Indian ethnicity was moulded by the dual pressures of the colonial situation and the Plantation Society. For eventually the Indians developed many of the cultural characteristics associated with this view and quickly learned how best to appeal to it in their dealing with officials, as the mass demonstrations and appeals of the early years of Windsor Forest show.

Now, with the move to independent government it is in one sense right that the allocation of scarce public resources to Windsor Forest rice farmers should be seen as a political decision that has to be fought for and justified, along with all the other claims on the Government's funds. Whilst this is valid in one sense, we must also recognise that such decision-making in Guyana has to be seen in the context of the competition between ethnic groups for these resources. Thus whilst the village has now been drawn into the national decision-making process more than ever before, the settlers complain about the overtly political character of this process largely because they feel that in the ethnically-based competition for Government resources the odds are stacked against them. Despite this fear they have been markedly successful to date, with the maintenance of the scheme's drainage and irrigation facilities still at the same high level, the new inflow of development funds to the CDC and Local Authority and their success in obtaining urban employment. Thus the

village is managing to keep up with the pressures upon it, but the villagers are having to work hard at it.

Just as it can be said that the village has been drawn more into the national political system, so it can be said that it has also been drawn more into the national 'creole' cultural system. The village has become more 'open' to other national attitudes and patterns of behaviour, and, furthermore, it is a process that has been going on for some time, for as Smith says:

"Even among the Indians, where there has been a definite attempt to preserve some Indian culture, the trend is towards the elimination of traditional 'coolie' culture and the substitution of a more self-conscious and intellectual complex based on written sources and capable of being cast in universal rather than particular terms. This will become even more essential as communications with other ethnic groups and other religions increases. In a sense Indian 'culture' in this context is becoming more 'westernised' as it is worked into a shape which fits the conditions of life in Guiana."

(R.T. Smith, 1962:203)

Thus we have a situation where the community of Windsor Forest continues to be heavily influenced by factors external to it. At one time it was a series of decisions made in London by Colonial Office officials, in collaboration with those in Guyana. These decisions in turn produced a framework of inputs, both administrative and financial, that surrounded the rice farming community. Now the situation has changed greatly, but the degree of dependency has not altered very much. The inputs into rice farming are still heavily dependent on Government and now there are increasing numbers of villagers who are directly or indirectly dependent on Government too for the cash income from wage labour which is essential for their economic survival.

Conclusions

In this situation the power and patronage of Government has increased greatly and shows every sign of continuing to increase. By becoming more and more dependent on Government in some way or another the villagers of Windsor Forest are being steadily drawn into the national system of political decision-making. No longer can they simply work through administrative structures like the Immigration Agent General or the Commissioner of Land and Mines, nor do they have to rely on the major ethnic organisations such as the Sid'r Islamic Anjuman or the Maha Sabha. Even the once-powerful 'Indian' force of the PPP appears to have been eclipsed. Now they have to deal with the entrenched power of the PNC regime directly, along with all the other competing elements in the Guyanese political spectrum.

This does not make them any the less 'Indian' in the traditional cultural sense, indeed they may well continue to express more and more varied forms of traditional Indian cultural characteristics. What is changing, however, is what 'Indian' means in the new political and economic climate of Guyana. It is possible to be sceptical of the extent to which the Guyanese people are following the bold claim of the motto on the national coat of arms and becoming 'One People' and 'One Nation'. However, it is becoming apparent that they increasingly have 'One Destiny'.

Therefore, as far as the implications of the changes experienced by Windsor Forest for the study of Guyanese ethnicity are concerned, I conclude that the increasing penetration of Indian workers into the traditional African urban job market will tend to increase ethnic tension. However, it should also be

noted that the People's National Congress, as the ruling party, is continually seeking to expand the extent of its patronage over the allocation of basic economic resources, so that the traditional Guyanese relationship between ethnicity and economic activity could become modified, and with it the scope for political ethnic action reduced.

SOCIAL CHANGE.

As was made clear in the Introduction, the research on which this thesis is based was originally conceived out of a sense of dissatisfaction with the theories of social change that were then current. What, then, are the implications for the anthropological study of social change that come out of this investigation? I consider the principle ones to be:

- 1) Neither modernisation theories nor dependency theories alone are adequate to explain specific situations of social change.

Both of these high level theories or paradigms are so general that they are not able to cope with the level of change at which individual researchers usually find themselves operating. Whilst they have a satisfying appeal as major orienting perspectives, they are very difficult to operationalise. Thus, although it is possible to find examples of behaviour and attitudes that tend to confirm these approaches, as I did in my research, these in themselves do not validate or condemn theories of this level.

Furthermore, they are both inherently unilinear theories, in which the advanced, developed nations of the capitalist West lead and

dominate the remainder of the world, benignly in one view, and less so in the other. Neither offers very much scope for variation and modification in the patterns and characteristics of the processes of social change. Yet it is precisely this kind of variation that anthropologists constantly encounter in their field research and which has to be accounted for in their reports and publications.

- 2) It is necessary to investigate the processes of decision making at the local level and to relate these to higher-level structures that constrain the decision making.

This thesis has been concerned with a situation of technical innovation and change within a context which was heavily influenced by national and international forces. I am sure that this is something that is a characteristic of a great many other situations of change in the Third World, and I feel that anthropological analyses should reflect this. Although there has been a good deal of interest of late in transactional approaches to the analysis of social life, particularly in the realm of politics, this has tended to be on the basis of a methodological individualism. Inevitably this has tended to focus on the role of leaders and the strategies they adopt for the maintenance of a following and the prosecution of their interests. Van Velzen (1973) roundly condemned this obsession with 'big men', but the problem remains.

Rather we should be examining the structures that constrain choices and actions by numerous participants in patterns of social action. One of the few works to do this within a transactional framework is that of Kapferer (1972), where the actions of workers in a factory are analysed within the context of the factory, the town and ultimately

the country in which they are all contained. I consider the scope for this kind of analysis within anthropology to be considerable.

- 3) There must be continuing refinement of our ideas about ethnicity.

One of the major disadvantages of the modernisation approach in particular is that it fails to account for the way in which values and motivations are refracted through concepts of ethnicity, as we have seen in the case of the farmers of Windsor Forest. On the other hand, among those who espouse an ethnicity perspective, there is a tendency to see ethnicity in very instrumental terms, often merely as a reflection of the concerns of a special 'interest group'. This is most apparent in the work of Abner Cohen, and is brought out in his statement that:

"Ethnicity provides an array of symbolic strategies for solving most or all of the basic problems of organisational articulation."
(Cohen 1974b:97)

This arises from Cohen's conviction that ethnicity is basically a political phenomenon, usually reflecting the basic economic interests of the group concerned. Whilst it is undoubtedly true that much ethnic activity is concerned with just these areas, I feel it would be a mistake to restrict the study of ethnicity to such an area. The problem has arisen partly, I feel, because so much of the study of ethnicity has been in situations where ethnicity was a crucial social identity. This is certainly true of the present study, but the case of Guyana does, I think, offer some pointers to other directions of analysis.

The central question in the study of ethnicity now is what are the factors that make ethnicity so crucial an identity in a particular society, why is ethnicity so 'salient' as Cross has it? The support of vested economic interests is one answer, and we saw this at work in the degree of ethnic/economic segregation (ecological niches) in Guyana. Furthermore, it was extended into the system of ethnic representation created by colonialism and extended in to the early party political system.

But what is noteworthy about the recent past is that the economic interests of the ethnic groups, and of the Indians in particular, are changing. With the growth of urban employment and the penetration of the Indians into the civil service and other Government agencies the old ecological niches are breaking down to some extent. At the same time the ruling party, the PNC, is sufficiently entrenched in power to set about uniting the country under its own version of the nation's destiny, which means taking more and more patronage into its hands. This too serves to break down the old ethnic interest group alignments in favour of new groupings of supporters and non-supporters.

Thus the ruling party is embarked on a campaign to diminish the significance of ethnicity in the key areas of economic and political action by undermining the utility of the existing structures in those areas. I am sure this is a strategy which is pursued by many Third World governments seeking to establish a stable administration in the aftermath of colonialism. It is even evident in Cohen's own classic study of the Hausa (1969), but the analysis ends before the matter is resolved. I consider it an aspect of ethnicity that deserves our earnest attention.

4) There is a need for more diachronic studies of social change.

Although there has been a good deal of assertion in the past about the need to see social change over a span of time, this has not been a characteristic of much of the research conducted on the topic so far. Similarly, although there has been much talk about the desirability of follow-up studies, these have not been common. Yet the research described in this thesis shows clearly the desirability and utility of duplicate studies of particular places and problems.

For at the time of Smith's 1956 study the future of the village of Windsor Forest appeared to be clear - it was moving towards a classic situation of agricultural involution as the villagers were increasingly caught between the pressures of the growing population on one hand and the limit of available agricultural land on the other. However, as has been demonstrated, the situation altered, for reasons that were not foreseeable in 1956. Thus the social change that has occurred in the village since then, and which has had a profound effect on the character of the community, did not correspond to what was expected.

The experience of Windsor Forest indicates the way in which the decisions that constitute social change are taken in a context that is a combination of external forces and localised factors. The high level theories of social change tend to view the processes involved as being essentially endogenous in origin and unilinear in effect, whereas this study has shown that at the local level these processes are likely to take a more erratic path and to be subject to many different pressures. Thus although social change may be seen as operating within a broad framework, at the community level one finds

individuals making decisions based on a much more restricted range of contingent pressures, and it is on this area of activity that we have to concentrate.

Although this is the level at which anthropology has traditionally operated, the requirements of the study of social change here are somewhat different to the traditional research practices of the discipline. I have already stressed the need to see decision-making in the context of hierarchies of constraining structures, and now I am stressing the need for this to be seen over time. For it is only by conducting research in this way that we are able to observe and assess the continuing pattern of adjustment and reaction that characterise the life of the localised community within the framework of the wider society, as it responds and adapts to external pressures.

Although I started the thesis by quoting Herscovits to the effect that change is universal and constant, we must also accept that at the community level it can take many forms. This in turn implies that we need to refine our research techniques to cope with the manifold variants of social change. Thus there is not just one form of social change: there are many social changes.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1THE GUYANESE ECONOMY1) Contribution of industrial groups to the Gross National Product

	1952	1956	1960	1964	1968	1971
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>Industries</u>						
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	32.4	25.3	26.5	25.1	19.6	20.5
Sugar cane	13.6	10.3	13.3	10.7	8.7	11.0
Padi	6.2	4.2	4.4	5.1	3.1	2.3
Mining & Quarrying	8.6	11.3	11.0	17.6	19.6	18.3
Bauxite & Alumina	na	na	8.1	10.0	18.1	17.4
Manufacturing & Processing	14.6	11.2	10.3	12.2	12.1	12.3
Sugar	na	na	4.2	4.0	3.1	3.8
Rice	na	na	0.8	1.6	1.0	0.6
Construction & Installation	6.2	10.3	9.5	5.0	7.4	7.8
Transport, Storage & Communication	6.2	6.6	7.5	6.6	6.4	6.0
Distributive Trade	13.0	14.6	14.1	12.9	12.7	11.0
Financial Institutions	2.4	1.9	3.2	2.9	3.1	3.7
Ownership of Dwellings	3.8	2.6	3.1	2.7	2.4	2.3
Public Administration	10.3	13.2	9.7	10.7	12.8	14.1
Miscellaneous Services	2.3	2.8	5.0	4.2	3.9	3.8
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Jainarain 1976 Table 8.4

2) Per capita income and annual growth rates 1952-71

<u>Year</u>	<u>Per-capita income (\$)</u>
1952	325
1956	387
1960	417
1964	422
1968	509
1971	599

<u>Year</u>	<u>Annual growth rate (%)</u>
1952-56	4.5
1956-60	1.9
1960-64	0.3
1964-68	4.8
1968-71	5.6

Source: Jainarain 1976 Table 8.3

3) Main items of domestic commodity exports - 1956-71

	1956	1960	1964	1968	1971
	%	%	%	%	%
Agricultural Products	65.7	65.7	51.8	46.4	45.0
Sugar cane Products	51.7	50.6	37.1	32.6	35.5
Sugar	46.7	46.0	32.5	28.5	31.8
Molasses & Rum	5.0	4.6	4.7	4.0	3.7
Rice	10.6	12.3	13.1	12.5	7.3
Timber	3.4	2.8	1.6	1.3	2.2
Mineral Products	32.8	27.4	40.0	46.1	48.0
Bauxite	31.4	23.6	18.5	27.9	33.1
Alumina	-	-	18.9	15.8	14.0
Diamonds	1.4	3.8	2.6	2.2	0.9
Manufactured Goods	1.7	4.2	3.0	2.8	2.4
Other	-	2.2	5.2	4.7	4.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Jainarain 1976 Table 8.11

APPENDIX 2RICE ACREAGES AND YIELDS - GUYANA

Year	Spring Acreage	Spring Yield tons/ rice	Autumn Acreage	Autumn Yield tons/ rice	TOTAL Yield tons/ rice
1946	8,953	6,804	85,623	57,668	64,472
1947	4,069	2,511	88,886	53,880	56,391
1948	8,685	3,500	67,058	56,280	59,780
1949	9,000	5,185	87,631	62,631	67,507
1950	9,379	2,400	83,668	59,345	61,745
1951	20,009	7,075	100,249	60,685	67,760
1952	17,515	5,982	133,301	68,138	74,120
1953	21,000	7,900	111,446	71,400	79,300
1954	19,328	8,475	130,075	80,087	88,562
1955	17,025	6,663	125,906	71,023	77,686
1956	17,555	5,431	118,470	73,039	78,470
1957	15,485	5,270	136,990	58,764	64,034
1958	15,865	9,519	155,140	87,621	97,140
1959	3,458	2,075	179,180	101,796	103,871
1960	24,932	10,573	195,475	109,134	119,707
1961	20,708	12,425	226,304	111,598	124,023
1962	35,973	16,749	230,000	121,300	138,049
1963	42,000	18,195	175,000	87,000	105,195
1964	65,000	31,349	266,000	144,643	175,992
1965	50,000	19,286	236,514	134,000	153,286
1966	25,000	15,000	266,078	147,600	162,600
1967	76,288	20,000	260,000	100,000	120,000
1968	34,000	31,000	216,000	89,000	120,000
1969	88,000	24,000	225,248	86,745	110,745
1970	90,673	37,000	226,281	106,980	143,980
1971	77,865	27,170	175,000	92,773	119,945
1972	83,800	25,667			

Source: Annual Report of the Rice Marketing Board, 1972
Appendix H

APPENDIX 3OCCUPATIONS OF WINDSOR FOREST EMPLOYEESMALES1) Local Labourers

Clean trenches
Cow minder
Labourer
Mason's assistant
Security guard

Cut rice
Fisherman
Machine loader
Porter

2) Non-Local Labourers

Cane cutter
Clean bins
Gardener
Loader
Plate layer
Pump attendant
Security guard

Carter
Cow minder
Labourer
Messenger
Porter
Roundsman
Weeding

3) Semi-Skilled

Assistant guard
Carpenter
Mosquito Control Asst.
Pole erector
Sailor

Bartender
Drive tractor
Operator
Ranger
Waiter

4) Skilled

Car repairs
Drive van
Engineer
Inspector
Mechanic's apprentice
Mosquito Control Officer
Propagator
Tailor
Welder

Drive truck
Driver
Foreman tailor
Mason
Mechanic
Policeman
Senior Ranger
Upholsterer
Welder's apprentice

5) Clerical

Accounts clerk
Checker
Clerical supervisor
Preacher
Sales assistant
Supervisor

Cashier
Clerk
Insurance agent
Sales clerk
Salesman
Weighmaster

6) Teachers

Primary teacher
Urdu teacher

Secondary teacher

7) Technical & Professional

Accountant
Agric. Field Officer
Assistant Engineer
Draughtsman
Inspector
Male nurse
Technical supervisor
Soil tester

Administrative cadet
Assistant Secretary
Civil Servant
Economist
Laboratory technician
Overseer
Technician
University teacher

FEMALES1) Local Labourers

Cut rice

Wash clothes

2) Non-Local Labourers

Domestic

3) Semi-Skilled

Garment sewing factory

Religious assistant

4) Clerical

Clerk
Secretary

Sales assistant
Typist

5) Teachers

Primary teachers

6) Technical & Professional

Midwife

APPENDIX 4URBAN EMPLOYERS OF WINDSOR FOREST WORKERS1) Small Employers

Aunt	Bacchus
'Baker'	'Barrister'
Boolai Singh	Brother
Cambridge Hotel	'Contractor'
Gomes	Ishmail
'Lombard Street Shop	Mai Ling
Maiji Hirilall	Mohan
Mosque	Sankar
'Solicitor'	Stephen Chin

2) Large Employers

Auto Supplies	Boodhoo Brothers
Briana Manufacturing	Central Garage
C.S. Tang	D'Aguiars
Demerara Mutual Life	Full O Pep Animal Foods
Gaffoors Dry Goods	Guyana Timbers
Hak's Cycle Store	J.P. Santos & Co.
Jaboors Dry Goods	Kirpalanis
A.L. Kissoon	H.L. Kissoon
Lyssons Knitwear	Monesswars
Persaud's Tailoring	Property Protection Services
Sawmill	Tulsi Persaud
Weiting & Richter	Yassins Garments

3) International Employers

American Life Assurance	Balfour Beatty
Bata	Bookers Garage
Bookers Shipping	Bookers Stores
British American Insurance	British High Commission
Diamond Estates	Guyana Molasses
Leonora Estates	Pegasus Hotel
Pimar International	Sandbach Parker
Sprostons	Texaco
Uitvlugt Estates	Versailles Estates
West Indies Oil Co.	Wales Estates

4) Central Government

Deeds Registry	Guyana Defence Force
Department of Lands & Mines	Ministry of Agriculture
Ministry of Communications	Ministry of Economic Development
Ministry of Education	Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Health	Ministry of Housing
Ministry of Justice	Ministry of Public Service
Ministry of Works, Hydraulics & Supply	

5) Government Agencies

Best Hospital	Botanic Gardens
Co-op Bank	Drainage and Irrigation Board
Electricity Board	General Post Office
Guyana Marketing Corporation	Guyana Police Force
Guyana Rice Corporation	National Insurance Scheme
Public Hospital Georgetown	Rice Marketing Board
School of Agriculture	Telecomms
Transport & Harbours Department	University of Guyana

6) Local Government

Georgetown City Council
Nouvelle Flanders/La Jalousie Local Authority

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

SOC ANTH/ERH/GUY/

Section I

Household Head:

Lot No:

Village:

Date:

Respondent:

House type:

No. of Rooms

Out buildings:

Owner of House:

Owner of Land

Amount of Rent House:

Land:

Remarks

Tick any of the following that are appropriate

Cakeshop	Electricity	Piped water
Grocery	Kerosene stove	Large vat
Store	Gas stove	Small drums
Spirit Shop	Refrigerator	Shower
Clubs	Chulah	Septic tank
Tailor's Shop		
Barber's Shop	Radio	
Shoemaker's Shop	Sewing machine	
Rice factory	Motor car	
Infant School	Record player	
	Tape recorder	

SECTION II

MEMBERS OF HOUSEHOLD

List all permanent residents including those temporarily away, but exclude temporary visitors

No.	Name	Relationship to Head	Sex	Age	Place of Birth	Conjugal Status	Education & School	Occupation	Religion and Group	Remarks Over

CONJUNAL HISTORY

III. CONCLUSIONS

[illegible]

SECTION IV RELATIVES WHO ARE LIVING ABROAD

Name	Relationship to ego	Where did they live in Guyana	Where do they live now	Date of leaving	Remarks

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD WHO HAVE BEEN ABROAD

Name	Countries travelled to	Purpose of travel	Duration of stay	Date of travel	Remarks

Are any members of the household considering travelling abroad?
(Give details)

What kind of jobs would you like your children to have?

What kind of boy would you like your daughter to marry?

SECTION V

FARMING

	Plot Number	Size (Acres)	Site of Plot	Owner or Rented	From whom Rented	Rent
Plots of Rice Land						
Cane Land						

Reaping Method:

How Selected:

Provisions Site of plot:

Where produce is sold:

ANIMALS

EQUIPMENT(Mark if owned)

Tractor(s)
(Give model and date of purchase)

Trailer

Pump

Plough

Other:

Spray

Is any of this equipment ever hired out?

Give brief details.

Name	Nature of Work	Employer and Place of Work	Date started or Frequency	Remarks

BUSINESSES

Nature of Business	Where Situated	Owner of Business	Operatives	Date Started	Remarks

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